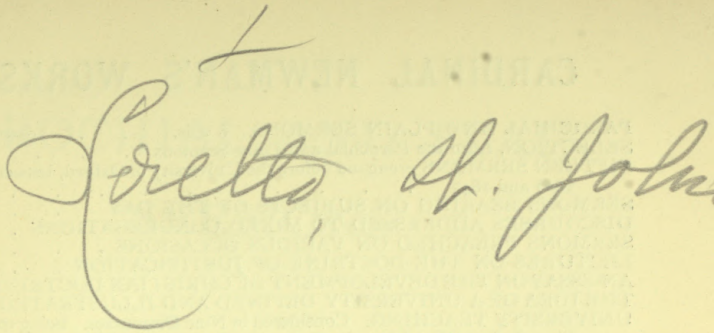

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REV. HUGH JAMES ROSE, B.D.

PRINCIPAL OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON,

AND DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

WHO, WHEN HEARTS WERE FAILING,

BADE US STIR UP THE GIFT THAT WAS IN US,

AND BETAKE OURSELVES TO OUR TRUE MOTHER,

THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

Nov. 19th, 1838

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SERMON I.

The Strictness of the Law of Christ.

"*Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*"
—Rom. vi. 18.

IN the passage of which these words form a part, St. Paul insists again and again on the great truth which they declare, that Christians are not their own, but bought with a price, and, as being so, are become the servants or rather the slaves of God and His righteousness; and this, upon their being rescued from the state of nature. The great Apostle is not content with speaking half the truth; he does not merely say that we are set free from guilt and misery, but he adds, that we have become the servants of Christ; nay, he uses a word which properly means *slaves*. Slaves are bought and sold; we were by nature slaves to sin and Satan; we are bought by the blood of Christ: we do not cease to be slaves. We no longer indeed belong to our old master; but a master we have, unless slaves on being bought become freemen. We are still slaves, but to a new master, and that master is Christ. He has not bought us, and then set us loose upon the world; but He has done for us what alone could complete His

first benefit, bought us to be His servants or slaves. He has given us that only liberty which is really such, bond-service to Himself; lest if left to ourselves, we should fall back again, as we certainly should, to the cruel bondage from which He redeemed us. But any how, whatever be the consequences it involves, whatever the advantage, whatever the trial, we did not cease to be slaves on being set free from Satan; but we became subject to a new Master, to Him who bought us.

This needs insisting on; for a number of persons who are not unwilling to confess that they are slaves by nature, from some cause or other have learned to think that they are not bound to any real service at all, now that Christ has set them free. Now if by the word *slavery*, some cruel and miserable state of suffering is meant, such as human masters often inflict on their slaves, in that sense indeed Christians are not slaves, and the word is improper to apply to them; but if by being slaves, is meant that we cannot throw up our service, change our place, and do as we will, in that sense it is literally true, that we are more than servants to Christ, we are, as the text really words it, slaves. Men often speak as if the perfection of human happiness lay in our being free to do or not to do, to choose and to reject. Now we are indeed thus free, as far as this,—that if we do not choose to be Christ's servants, we can go back to that old bondage from which He rescued us, and be slaves again to the powers of evil. But though we are free to make our situation worse, we are not free to be without service or post of any kind. It is not in man's nature to be out of all service and to be self-

dependent. We may choose our master, but God or mammon we must serve. We cannot possibly be in a neutral or intermediate state. Such a state does not exist. If we will not be Christ's servants, we are forthwith Satan's; and Christ set us free from Satan only by making us His servants. Satan's kingdom touches upon Christ's, the world touches on the Church; and we cease to be Satan's property by becoming Christ's. We cannot be without a master, such is the law of our nature; yet a number of persons, as I have said, overlook it, and think their Christian liberty lies in being free from all law, even from the law of God. Such an error seems to have obtained even in St. Paul's time, and is noticed in the chapter before us. Men seem to have thought that, since the law of sin was annulled, and the terrors of the law of nature removed, that therefore they were under no law at all; that their own will was their law, and that faith stood instead of obedience. In opposition to this great mistake, St. Paul reminds his brethren in the text, that when they were "made free from *sin*," they "became the servants of *righteousness*." And again, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law," that is, the law of nature, "but under grace," or (as he elsewhere expresses it), "the law of faith," or, "the law of the Spirit of life." They were not without a master, but they had a gracious and bountiful one.

He says the same in other Epistles. For instance, "He that is called, being free" (that is, free as regards this world), "is Christ's servant" or slave. "Ye are bought with a price: be not ye slaves of *men*," but, that

is, be slaves of Christ. Again, after saying, "Slaves obey in all things your masters according to the flesh," he adds, "for ye are slaves to the Lord Christ." Elsewhere he speaks of himself as "Paul a servant," or slave, as the word really means, "of Jesus Christ;" and again, as "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ."[1]

Religion then is a necessary service; of course it is a privilege too, but it becomes more and more of a privilege, the more we exercise ourselves in it. The perfect Christian state is that in which our duty and our pleasure are the same, when what is right and true is natural to us, and in which God's "service is perfect freedom." And this is the state towards which all true Christians are tending; it is the state in which the Angels stand; entire subjection to God in thought and deed is their happiness; an utter and absolute captivity of their will to His will, is their fulness of joy and everlasting life. But it is not so with the best of us, except in part. Upon our regeneration indeed, we have a seed of truth and holiness planted within us, a new law introduced into our nature; but still we have that old nature to subdue, "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."[2] That is, we have a work, a conflict all through life. We have to master and bring under all we are, all we do, expelling all disorder and insubordination, and teaching and impressing on every part of us, of soul and body, its due place and duty, till we are wholly Christ's in will,

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 22, 23. Col. iii. 22, 24. Rom. i. 1. 1 Cor. ix. 21.
[2] Eph. iv. 22.

affections, and reason, as we are by profession; in St. Paul's words, "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."[3]

Now I may seem to have been saying what every one will at once confess. And yet, after all, nothing perhaps is so rare among those who profess to be Christians, as an assent in practice to the doctrine that they are under a law; nothing so rare as strict obedience, unreserved submission to God's will, uniform conscientiousness in doing their duty,—as a few instances will at once show.

Most Christians then will allow in general terms that they are under a law, but then they admit it with a reserve; they claim for themselves some dispensing power in their observance of the law. What I am saying is quite independent of the question, what is the *standard* of obedience which each man proposes to himself? One man puts the line of his duty higher than another; some men take a low view of it, confining it to mere personal morality; others confine it to their social obligations; others limit it by some conventional law, which is received in particular classes or circles; others include religious observances. But whether men view the law of conscience as high or low, as broad or narrow, few indeed there are who make it a rule to themselves; few there are who make their own notion of it, whatever that be, binding on themselves; few who even profess to act up to it uniformly and consistently.

[3] 2 Cor. x. 5.

Inquire of the multitude of men, as you meet them in the world, and you will find that one and all think it allowable at times to put themselves above the law, even according to their own standard of it; to make exceptions and reserves, as if they were absolute sovereigns of their conscience, and had a dispensing power upon occasions.

What is the sort of man whom the world accounts respectable and religious, in a high rank or a lower? At best he is such as this. He has a number of good points in his character; but some of these he has by nature, and if others have been acquired by trouble, it is either because outward circumstances compelled him to acquire them, or that he has from nature some active principle within him, of one kind or another, which has exerted itself, and brought other principles under, and rules him. He has acquired a certain self-command, because no one is respected without it. He has been forced into habits of diligence, punctuality, precision, and honesty. He is courteous and obliging; and has learned not to say all he thinks and feels, or to do all he wishes to do, on all occasions. The great mass of men of course are far from having in them so much that is really praise-worthy as this; but I am supposing the best. I am supposing then, that a man's character and station are such, that only now and then he will feel his inclinations or his interest to run counter to his duty. Such times constitute his trial; there is nothing to hinder him serving God in the ordinary course, but the proof of his sincerity lies in his conduct on these extraordinary occasions. Now this is the point to which I

wish to draw attention; for these very occasions, which alone are his times of trial, are just the times on which he is apt to consider that he has a leave to dispense with the law. He dispenses with it at those very times when it is simply the law of God, without being also the law of self, and of the world. He does what is right, while the road of religion runs along the road of the world; when they part company awhile, he chooses the world, and calls his choice an exception. He does right for ninety-nine days, but on the hundredth he knowingly and wilfully does wrong; and if he does not justify, at least he absolves himself in doing it.

For instance; he *generally* comes to Church, it is his *practice;* but some urgent business at a certain time presses on him, or some scheme of pleasure tempts him: —he omits his attendance; he knows this is wrong, and says so, but it is only once in a way.

Again; he is strictly honest in his dealings; he speaks the truth, that is, it is his rule to do so; but if hard pressed, he allows himself now and then in a falsehood, particularly if it is a slight one. He knows he should not lie; he confesses it; but he thinks it cannot be helped; it is unavoidable from circumstances, as being his only way of escaping some great difficulty. In *such* a case it is, as he says, all fair, and so he gets over it; that is, in a case where he must either disobey God, or incur some temporal disadvantage.

Again; he has learned to curb his temper and his tongue; but on some unusual provocation they get the better of him. He becomes angry, says what he should not, perhaps curses and swears. Are not all men subject

to be overtaken with anger or ill temper? that is not the point: the point is this,—that he does not feel compunction afterward, he does not feel he has done any thing which needs forgiveness. On the contrary, he defends himself to himself, on the plea that such language is very *unusual* with him; he does not understand that he is under a law, which he may not put himself above, which he may not dispense with.

Once more; he is in general sober and temperate; but he joins a party of friends and makes merry; he is tempted to exceed. Next day he says that it is a long time since such a thing happened to him; it is not at all his way; he hardly touches wine or the like in common. He does not understand he has any sin to repent of, because it is but once in a way.

And now, I suppose, you quite understand what I mean, and I need not say more in explanation. Such men, being thus indulgent to themselves, are indulgent to each other; they make allowance for all around them, as taking what they give freely. This is the secret of being friends with the world, to have a sympathy and a share in its sins. They who are strict with themselves are strict with the world; but where men grant themselves a certain licence of disobedience, they do not draw the line very rigidly as regards others. Conscious of what might be said against themselves, they are cautious what they say against others; and they meet them on the understanding of a mutual sufferance. They learn to say, that the private habits of their neighbours are nothing to them; and they hold intercourse with them only as public men, or members of society, or in the way

of business, not at all as with responsible beings having immortal souls. They desire to see and know nothing but what is on the surface; and they call a man's personal history sacred, because it is sinful. In their eyes, their sole duty to their neighbour is, not to offend him; whatever his morals, whatever his creed, is nothing to them. Such are they in mature and advanced life; in youth, they are pliable as well as indulgent, they readily fall in with the ways of the world, as they come across them. They are, and have the praise of being, pleasant, good-tempered, and companionable. They are not bad-principled, or evilly disposed, or flagrantly irregular, but they are lax. They in no sense live by rule. They have high spirits, and all the natural amiableness which youth has to show, and they generally go right; but, since they have no root in themselves, an accident from within or without, the stirring of a passion, or the incitement of a friend, makes them swerve at once. They swerve, and they have little compunction afterwards; they forget it. They shrink from the notion of being under a law, and think religion gloomy as imposing it. They like their own way, and without any great extreme of sin, or at least any habits of sin, follow it. They are orderly and well-conducted, when among well-conducted people,—at home, for instance; but they indulge themselves abroad, when temptation comes in their way. They have the world at will; they are free; alas! what a melancholy freedom! yet in one sense a freedom it is. A religious man must withdraw his eyes from sights which inflame his heart, recollecting our Saviour's caution; but a man of the world thinks it no harm to gaze where he should not,

because he goes no further. A religious man watches his words; but the other utters whatever his heart prompts, and excuses himself for profane language, on the plea that he means nothing by it. A religious man will scruple about his society; but the other takes part in jests and excesses, though he condemns while he shares them, but not himself for sharing, and despises those with whom he shares them. He can see life, as it is called. He can go among all sorts of people, for he has no troublesome ceremonial, no rule of religion to shackle him. Perhaps he goes abroad, and then for a time he considers himself to be in disguise, as an unknown person in unknown countries, permitted to fall in with all things bad and good, as they come. Or again, he may be so circumstanced, whatever his station, as to find himself engaged in what are called politics; and then he thinks that though truth and religion are certainly all-commanding and all-important, yet still the world could not go on, public business would be at a stand, political parties would be unable to act, all that he really loves and reveres would become but of secondary concern, if religion refused at all times to give way ever so little. Again; a religious man carries his religion into his conduct throughout the day; but lax persons will do many things in private, which they would not like to be known. They will overreach, if they can do it without noise. They will break promises when made to an inferior. Or, if they have time on their hands, they will be curious and meddlesome; they will speak against others and spread scandals. They will pry into things which do not concern them, according to their

station in life. They will listen where they have no right to listen; they will read what they have no right to read. Or they will allow themselves in petty thefts, where they think they do no injury, excusing themselves on the plea that what they take will never be missed. Or in matters of trade, they think a certain sort and degree of double-dealing allowable, and no dishonesty. They argue with themselves as if it were not their business to be true and just, but of others to find them out; and as if fraud and cheating did not imply sin in the one party, but dulness in the other. If in humble life, they think it no harm to put on an appearance; to profess what is not strictly true, if they are to gain by it; to colour a story; or to affect to be more religious than they are; or to pretend to agree in religion with persons from whom they hope something; or to take up a religion if it is their interest to do so; or to profess two or three religions at once, when any alms or other benefit is to be given away.

These are a few out of a multitude of traits which mark an easy religion,—the religion of the world; which would cast in its lot with Christian truth, were not that truth so very strict, and quarrels with it and its upholders, not as if it were not good and right, but because it is so unbending,—because it will not suit itself to times and emergencies, and to the private and occasional likings and tastes of individuals. This is the kind of religion which St. Paul virtually warns us against, as often as he speaks of the Gospel as really being a law and a servitude. He indeed glories in its being such; for, as the happiness of all creatures lies in their performing their

parts well, where God has placed them, so man's greatest good lies in obedience to God's law and in imitation of God's perfections. But the Apostle knew that the world would not think so, and therefore he insists on it. Therefore it is that he insists on the necessity of Christians "*fulfilling* the righteousness of the law;" fulfilling it, because till we aim at complete, unreserved obedience in all things, we are not really Christians at all. Hence St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." And our Saviour assures us that "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;" and that "Except our righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," which was thus partial and circumscribed, "we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And when the young man came to Him, saying that he had kept all the commandments, and asking what he lacked, He pointed out the "one thing" wanting in him; and when he would not complete his obedience by that one thing, but went away sorrowful, then, as if all his obedience in other points availed him nothing, Christ added, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God?"[4] Let us not then deceive ourselves; what God demands of us is to fulfil His law, or at least to aim at fulfilling it; to be content with nothing short of perfect obedience,—to attempt every thing,—to avail ourselves of the aids given us, and throw ourselves, not first, but afterwards on God's mercy

[4] Rom. viii. 1-4. James ii. 10. Matt. v. 19, 20. Mark x. 21, 24.

for our short-comings. This is, I know, at first hearing a startling doctrine; and so averse are our hearts to it, that some men even attempt to maintain that it is an unchristian doctrine. A forlorn expedient indeed, with the Bible to refer to, and its statements about the strait gate and the narrow way. Still men would fain avail themselves of it, if they could; they argue that all enforcement of religion as a service or duty is erroneous, or what they call legal, and that no observance is right but what proceeds from impulse, or what they call the heart. They would fain prove that the law is not binding on us, because Christ has fulfilled it; or because, as is the case, faith would be accepted instead of obedience in those who had not yet had time to begin fulfilling it.

Such persons appeal to Scripture, and they must be refuted, as is not difficult, from Scripture; but the multitude of men do not take so much trouble about the matter. Instead of even professing to discover what God has said, they take what they call a common-sense view of it. They maintain it is impossible that religion should really be so strict according to God's design. They condemn the notion as over-strained and morose. They profess to admire and take pleasure in religion as a whole, but think that it should not be needlessly pressed in details, or, as they express it, carried too far. They complain only of its particularity, if I may use the term, or its want of indulgence and consideration in little things; that is, in other words, they like religion before they have experience of it,—in prospect,—at a distance,—*till* they have to be religious. They like to talk of it, they like to see men religious; they think it

commendable and highly important; but directly religion comes home to them in real particulars of whatever kind, they like it not. It suffices them to have seen and praised it; they feel it a burden whenever they feel it at all, whenever it calls upon them to do what otherwise they would not do. In a word, the state of the multitude of men is this,—their hearts are going the wrong way; and their real quarrel with religion, if they know themselves, is not that it is strict, or engrossing, or imperative, not that it goes too far, but that it *is* religion. It is religion itself which we all by nature dislike, not the excess merely. Nature tends towards the earth, and God is in heaven. If I want to travel north, and all the roads are cut to the east, of course I shall complain of the roads. I shall find nothing but obstacles; I shall have to surmount walls, and cross rivers, and go round about, and after all fail of my end. Such is the conduct of those who are not bold enough to give up a profession of religion, yet wish to serve the world. They try to reach Babylon by roads which run to Mount Sion. Do you not see that they necessarily must meet with thwartings, crossings, disappointments, and failure? They go mile after mile, watching in vain for the turrets of the city of Vanity, because they are on the wrong road; and, unwilling to own what they are really seeking, they find fault with the road as circuitous and wearisome. They accuse religion of interfering with what they consider their innocent pleasures and wishes. But religion is a bondage only to those who have not the heart to like it, who are not cast into its mould. Accordingly, in the verse before

the text, St. Paul thanks God that his brethren had "obeyed from the *heart* that *form* of teaching, into which they had been delivered." We Christians are cast into a certain mould. So far as we keep within it, we are not sensible that it is a mould, or has an outline. It is when our hearts would overflow in some evil direction, then we discover that we are confined, and consider ourselves in prison. It is the law in our members warring against the law of the Spirit which brings us into a distressing bondage. Let us then see where we stand, and what we must do. Heaven cannot change; God is "without variableness or shadow of turning." His "word endureth for ever in heaven." His law is from everlasting to everlasting. *We* must change. We must go over to the side of heaven. Never had a soul true happiness but in conformity to God, in obedience to His will. We must become what we are not; we must learn to love what we do not love, and practise ourselves in what is difficult. We must have the law of the Spirit of life written and set up in our hearts, "that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us," and that we may learn to please and to love God.

Lastly, as some men defend their want of strictness on what they consider the authority of Scripture, and others, that is, the majority, try to persuade themselves that religion cannot really be strict, whatever strong expressions or statements may be found in Scripture, others again there are, who take a more candid, but a more daring course. Instead of making excuses, such as I have been considering, they frankly admit the fact, and then go on to urge it as a valid argument against

religion altogether. Instead of professing to like religion, *all but* its service, they boldly object that religion is altogether unnatural, and therefore cannot be incumbent on us. They say that it is very well for its ministers and teachers to set up a high doctrine, but that men are men, and the world is the world, and that life was not meant to be a burden, and that God sent us here for enjoyment, and that He will never punish us hereafter for following the law of our nature. I answer, doubtless this life was meant to be enjoyment; but why not a rejoicing in the Lord? We were meant to follow the law of our nature; but why of our old nature, why not of our new? Were we indeed in the state of our first nature, under the guilt and defilement of our birth-sin, then this argument might be urged speciously, though not conclusively of course then; but how does it apply to Christians? Now that God has opened the doors of our prison-house, and brought us into the kingdom of His Son, if men are still carnal men, and the world a sinful world, and the life of Angels a burden, and the law of our nature not the law of God, whose fault is it?

We Christians are indeed under the law as other men, but, as I have already said, it is the new law, the law of the Spirit of Christ. We are under grace. That law, which to nature is a grievous bondage, is to those who live under the power of God's presence, what it was meant to be, a rejoicing. When then we feel reluctant to serve God, when thoughts rise within us as if He were a hard Master, and that His promises are not attractive enough to balance the strictness of His com-

mandments, let us recollect that we, as being Christians, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, and let us act upon the conviction of it. Let us go to Him for grace. Let us seek His face. Let us come where He gives grace. Let us come to the ordinances of grace, in which Christ gives His Holy Spirit, to enable us to do that which by nature we cannot do, and to be "the servants of righteousness." They who pray for His saving help to change their likings and dislikings, their tastes, their views, their wills, their hearts, do not indeed all at once gain what they seek;—they do not gain it at once asking;—they do not *perceive* they gain it while they gain it,—but if they come continually day by day to Him,—if they come humbly,—if they come in faith,—if they come, not as a trial how they shall like God's service, but throwing (as far as may be) their whole hearts and souls into their duty as a sacrifice to Him,—if they come, not seeking a sign, but determined to go on seeking Him, honouring Him, serving Him, trusting Him, whether they see light, or feel comfort, or discern their growth, or no,—such men *will* gain, though they know it not; they will find, even while they are still seeking; before they call, He will answer them, and they will in the end find themselves saved wondrously, to their surprise, how they know not, and when their crown seemed at a distance. "They that wait on the Lord," says the Prophet, "shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."[5]

[5] Isaiah xl. 31.

SERMON II.

Obedience without Love, as instanced in the Character of Balaam.

"*The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.*"—NUMB. xxii. 38.

WHEN we consider the Old Testament as written by divine inspiration, and preserved, beyond the time of its own Dispensation, for us Christians,—as acknowledged and delivered over to us by Christ Himself, and pronounced by St. Paul to be "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness,"[1]—we ought not surely to read any portion of it with indifference, nay, without great and anxious interest. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" is the sort of inquiry which spontaneously arises in the serious mind. Christ and His Apostle cannot have put the Law and the Prophets into our hands for nothing. I would this thought were more carefully weighed than it commonly is. We profess indeed to revere the Old Testament; yet, for some reason or other, at least one considerable part of it, the historical, is regarded by the mass, even of men who think about religion, as merely

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 16.

historical, as a relation of facts, as antiquities; not in its divine characters, not in its practical bearings, not in reference to themselves. The notion that God speaks in it to them personally, the question, "*What* does He say?" "What must I *do?*" does not occur to them. They consider that the Old Testament concerns them only as far as it can be made typical of one or two of the great Christian doctrines; they do not consider it in its fulness, and in its literal sense, as a collection of deep moral lessons, such as are not vouchsafed in the New, though St. Paul expressly says that it is "profitable for instruction in righteousness."

If the Old Testament history generally be intended as a permanent instruction to the Church, much more, one would think, must such prominent and remarkable passages in it as the history of Balaam. Yet I suspect a very great number of readers carry off little more from it than the impression of the miracle which occurs in it, the speaking of his ass. And not unfrequently they talk more lightly on the subject than is expedient. Yet I think some very solemn and startling lessons may be drawn from the history, some of which I shall now attempt to set before you.

What is it which the chapters in question present to us? The first and most general account of Balaam would be this;—that he was a very eminent person in his age and country, that he was courted and gained by the enemies of Israel, and that he promoted a wicked cause in a very wicked way; that, when he could do nothing else for it, he counselled the Moabites to employ their women as means of seducing the chosen

people into idolatry; and that he fell in battle in the war which ensued. These are the chief points, the prominent features of his history as viewed at a distance; —and repulsive indeed they are. He took on him the office of a tempter, which is especially the Devil's office. But Satan himself does not seem so hateful near as at a distance; and when we look into Balaam's history closely, we shall find points of character which may well interest those who do not consider his beginning and his end. Let us then approach him more nearly, and forget for a moment the summary account of him, which I have just been giving.

Now first he was blessed with God's especial favour. You will ask at once, How could so bad a man be in God's favour? but I wish you to put aside reasonings, and contemplate facts. I say he was especially favoured by God; God has a store of favours in His treasure-house, and of various kinds,—some for a time, some for ever,—some implying His approbation, others not. He showers favours even on the bad. He makes His sun to rise on the unjust as well as on the just. He willeth not the death of a sinner. He is said to have loved the young ruler, whose heart, notwithstanding, was upon the world. His loving-mercy extends over all His works. How He separates in His own divine thought, kindness from approbation, time from eternity, what He does from what He foresees, we know not and need not inquire. At present He is loving to all men, as if He did not foresee that some are to be saints, others reprobates to all eternity. He dispenses His favours variously,—gifts, graces, rewards, faculties, circumstances being in-

definitely diversified, nor admitting of discrimination or numbering on our part. Balaam, I say, was in His favour; not indeed for his holiness' sake, not for ever; but in a certain sense, according to His inscrutable purpose,—who chooses whom He will choose, and exalts whom He will exalt, without destroying man's secret responsibilities or His own governance, and the triumph of truth and holiness, and His own strict impartiality in the end. Balaam was favoured in an especial way above the mere heathen. Not only had he the grant of inspiration, and the knowledge of God's will, an insight into the truths of morality, clear and enlarged, such as even we Christians cannot surpass; but he was even admitted to conscious intercourse with God, such as we Christians have not. In our Sunday Services, you may recollect, we read the chapters which relate to this intercourse; and we do not read those which record the darker passages of his history. Now, do you not think that most persons, who know only so much of him as our Sunday lessons contain, form a very mild judgment about him? They see him indeed to be on the wrong side, but still view him as a prophet of God. Such a judgment is not incorrect as far as it goes; and I appeal to it, if it be what I think it is, as a testimony how highly Balaam was in God's favour.

But again, Balaam was, in the ordinary and commonly-received sense of the word, without straining its meaning at all, a very *conscientious* man. That this is so, will be plain from some parts of his conduct and some speeches of his, of which I proceed to remind you; and which will show also his enlightened and admirable

view of moral and religious obligation. When Balak sent to him to call him to curse Israel, he did not make up his mind for himself, as many a man might do, or according to the suggestions of avarice and ambition. No, he brought the matter before God in prayer. He *prayed* before he did what he did, as a religious man ought to do. Next, when God forbade his going, he at once, as he ought, positively refused to go. "Get you into your land," he said, "for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." Balak sent again a more pressing message and more lucrative offers, and Balaam was even more decided than before. "If Balak," he said, "would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Afterwards God gave him leave to go. "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them."[2] Then, and not till then, he went.

Almighty God added, "Yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do." Now, in the next place, observe how strictly he obeyed this command. When he first met Balak, he said, in the words of the text, "Lo I am come unto thee; have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak." Again, when he was about to prophesy, he said, "Whatsoever He showeth me I will tell thee;"[3] and he did so, in spite of Balak's disappointment and mortification to hear him bless Israel. When Balak showed his impatience, he only replied calmly, "Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?" Again he

[2] Numb. xxii. [3] Numb. xxiii.

prophesied, and again it was a blessing; again Balak was angered, and again the prophet firmly and serenely answered, "Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?" A third time he prophesied blessing; and now Balak's anger was kindled, and he smote his hands together, and bade him depart to his place. But Balaam was not thereby moved from his duty. "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death."[4] Balak might have instantly revenged himself upon the prophet; but Balaam, not satisfied with blessing Israel, proceeded, as a prophet should, to deliver himself of what remained of the prophetic burden, by foretelling more pointedly than before, destruction to Moab and the other enemies of the chosen people. He prefaced his prophecy with these unacceptable words,—"Spake I not also unto thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind? but what the Lord saith, that will I speak. And now behold, I go unto my people; come, therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days." After delivering his conscience, he "rose up, and went and returned to his place."

All this surely expresses the conduct and the feelings of a high-principled, honourable, conscientious man. Balaam, I say, was certainly such, in that very sense in which we commonly use those words. He said, and he did; he professed, and he acted according to his professions. There is no inconsistency in word and deed. He

[4] Prov. xvi. 14.

obeys as well as talks about religion; and this being the case, we shall feel more intimately the value of the following noble sentiments which he lets drop from time to time, and which, if he had shown less firmness in his conduct, might have passed for mere words, the words of a maker of speeches, a sophist, moralist, or orator. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent . . . Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." It is remarkable that these declarations are great and lofty in their mode of expression; and the saying of his recorded by the prophet Micah is of the same kind. Balak asked what sacrifices were acceptable to God. Balaam answered, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"[5]

Viewing then the inspired notices concerning Balaam in all their parts, we cannot deny to him the praise which, if those notices have a plain meaning, they certainly do convey, that he was an honourable and religious man, with a great deal of what was great and noble about him; a man whom any one of us at first sight would have trusted, sought out in our difficulties, perhaps made the head of a party, and any how spoken of with great respect. We may indeed, if we please, say that he fell away afterwards from all this excellence:

[5] Micah vi. 8.

though, after all, there is something shocking in such a notion. Nay, it is not natural even that ordinarily honourable men should suddenly change; but however this *may* be said,—it may be said he fell away; but, I presume, it *cannot* be said that he was other than a high-principled man (in the language of the world) *when* he so spoke and acted.

But now the strange thing is, that at this very time, *while* he so spoke and acted, he seems, as in one sense to be in God's favour, so in another and higher to be under His displeasure. If this be so, the supposition that he fell away will not be in point; the difficulty it proposes to solve will remain; for it will turn out that he was displeasing to God *amid* his many excellences. The passage I have in mind is this, as you will easily suppose. "God's anger was kindled, because he went" with the princes of Moab, "and the Angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him." Afterwards, when God opened his eyes, "he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand" . . . "And Balaam said, I have *sinned,* for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." You observe Balaam said, "I have sinned," *though* he avers he did not *know* that God was his adversary. What makes the whole transaction the more strange is this,—that Almighty God had said before, "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them;" and that when Balaam offered to go back again, the Angel repeated, "Go with the men." And afterwards we find in the midst of his heathen enchantments

"God met Balaam," and "put a word in his mouth;" and afterwards "the Spirit of God came unto him."

Summing up then what has been said, we seem, in Balaam's history, to have the following remarkable case, that is, remarkable according to our customary judgment of things: a man divinely favoured, visited, influenced, guided, protected, eminently honoured, illuminated,—a man possessed of an enlightened sense of duty, and of moral and religious acquirements, educated, high-minded, conscientious, honourable, firm; and yet on the side of God's enemies, personally under God's displeasure, and in the end (if we go on to that) the direct instrument of Satan, and having his portion with the unbelievers. I do not think I have materially overstated any part of this description; but if it be correct only in substance, it certainly is most fearful, after allowing for incidental exaggeration,—most fearful to every one of us, the more fearful the more we are conscious to ourselves in the main of purity of intention in what we do, and conscientious adherence to our sense of duty.

And now it is natural to ask, what is the *meaning* of this startling exhibition of God's ways? Is it really possible that a conscientious and religious man should be found among the enemies of God, nay, should be personally displeasing to Him, and that at the very time God was visiting him with extraordinary favour? What a mystery is this! Surely, if this be so, Revelation has added to our perplexities, not relieved them! What instruction, what profit, what correction, what doctrine is there in such portions of inspired Scripture?

In answering this difficulty, I observe in the first

place, that it certainly is impossible, quite impossible, that a really conscientious man should be displeasing to God; at the same time it is possible to be *generally* conscientious, or what the world calls honourable and high-principled, yet to be destitute of that religious fear and strictness, which God calls conscientiousness, but which the world calls superstition or narrowness of mind. And bearing this in mind, we shall, perhaps, have a solution of our perplexities concerning Balaam.

And here I would make a remark: that when a passage of Scripture, descriptive of God's dealings with man, is obscure or perplexing, it is as well to ask ourselves whether this may not be owing to some insensibility, in ourselves or in our age, to certain peculiarities of the Divine law or government therein involved. Thus, to those who do not understand the nature and history of religious truth, our Lord's assertion about sending a sword on earth is an obscurity. To those who consider sin a light evil, the doctrine of eternal punishment is a difficulty. In like manner the history of the flood, of the call of Abraham, of the plagues of Egypt, of the wandering in the desert, of the judgment on Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and a multitude of other occurrences, may be insuperable difficulties, except to certain states and tempers of mind, to which, on the contrary, they will seem quite natural and obvious. I consider that the history of Balaam is a striking illustration of this remark. Those whose hearts, like Josiah's, are "tender," scrupulous, sensitive in religious matters, will see with clearness and certainty what the real state of the case was as regards him; on the other hand, our

difficulties about it, if we have them, are a presumption that the age we live in has not the key to a certain class of Divine providences, is deficient in a certain class of religious principles, ideas, and sensibilities. Let it be considered then whether the following remarks may not tend to lessen our perplexity.

Balaam obeyed God from a sense of its being right to do so, but not from a *desire to please Him*, not from *fear and love*. He had other ends, aims, wishes of his own, distinct from God's will and purpose, and he would have effected these if he could. His endeavour was, not to please God, but to please self without displeasing God; to pursue his own ends *as far* as was consistent with his duty. In a word, he did not give his heart to God, but obeyed Him, as a man may obey human law, or observe the usages of society or his country, as something external to himself, because he knows he ought to do so, from a sort of rational good sense, a conviction of its propriety, expediency, or comfort, as the case may be.

You will observe he *wished* to go with Balak's messengers, only he felt he *ought not* to go; and the problem which he attempted to solve was *how* to go and yet not offend God. He was quite resolved he *would* any how act religiously and conscientiously; he was too honourable a man to break any of his engagements; if he had given his word, it was sacred; if he had duties, they were imperative: he had a character to maintain, and an inward sense of propriety to satisfy; but he would have given the world to have got rid of his duties; and the question was, *how* to do so without violence; and he did not care about walking on the very brink of transgression, so that

he could keep from falling over. Accordingly he was not content with *ascertaining* God's will, but he attempted to *change* it. He inquired of Him a *second time*, and this was to tempt Him. Hence, while God bade him go, His anger was kindled against him because he went.

This surely is no uncommon character; rather, it is the common case even with the more respectable and praiseworthy portion of the community. I say plainly, and without fear of contradiction, though it is a serious thing to say, that the aim of most men esteemed conscientious and religious, or who are what is called honourable, upright men, is, to all appearance, not how to please God, but how to please themselves without displeasing Him. I say confidently,—that is, if we may judge of men in general by what we see,—that they make this world the first object in their minds, and use religion as a corrective, a restraint, upon *too much* attachment to the world. They think that religion is a negative thing, a sort of moderate love of the world, a moderate luxury, a moderate avarice, a moderate ambition, and a moderate selfishness. You see this in numberless ways. You see it in the course of trade, of public life, of literature, in all matters where men have objects to pursue. Nay you see it in religious exertions; of which it too commonly happens that the chief aim is, to attain *any how* a certain definite end, religious indeed, but of man's own choosing; not, to please God, and *next*, if possible, to attain it; not, to attain it religiously, or not at all.

This surely is so plain that it is scarcely necessary to enlarge upon it. Men do not take for the object towards

which they act, God's will, but certain maxims, rules, or measures, right perhaps as far as they go, but defective because they admit of being subjected to certain other ultimate ends, which are not religious. Men are just, honest, upright, trustworthy; but all this not from the love and fear of God, but from a mere feeling of obligation to be so, and in subjection to certain worldly objects. And thus they are what is popularly called moral, without being religious. Such was Balaam. He was in a popular sense a strictly moral, honourable, conscientious man; that he was not so in a heavenly and true sense is plain, if not from the considerations here insisted on, at least from his after history, which (we may presume) brought to light his secret defect, in whatever it consisted.

And here we see why he spoke so much and so vauntingly of his determination to follow God's direction. He made a great *point* of following it; his end was not to please God, but to keep straight with Him. He who loves does not act from calculation or reasoning; he does not in his cool moments reflect upon or talk of what he is doing, as if it were a great sacrifice. Much less does he pride himself on it; but this is what Balaam seems to have done.

I have been observing that his defect lay in this, that he had not a single eye towards God's will, but was ruled by other objects. But moreover, this evil heart of unbelief showed itself in a peculiar way, to which it is necessary to draw your attention, and to which I alluded just now in saying that the difficulties of Scripture often arose from the defective moral condition of our hearts.

Why did Almighty God give Balaam leave to go to Balak, and then was angry with him for going? I suppose for this reason, because his asking twice was tempting God. God is a jealous God. Sinners as we are, nay as creatures of His hands, we may not safely intrude upon Him, and make free with Him. We may not dare to do that, which we should not dare to do with an earthly superior, which we should be punished, for instance, for attempting in the case of a king or noble of this world. To rush into His presence, to address Him familiarly, to urge Him, to strive to make our duty lie in one direction when it lies in another, to handle rudely and practise upon His holy word, to trifle with truth, to treat conscience lightly, to take liberties (as it may be called) with any thing that is God's, all irreverence, profaneness, unscrupulousness, wantonness, is represented in Scripture not only as a sin, but as felt, noticed, quickly returned on God's part (if I may dare use such human words of the Almighty and All-holy God, without transgressing the rule I am myself laying down,—but He vouchsafes in Scripture to represent Himself to us in that only way in which we can attain to the knowledge of Him), I say all irreverence towards God is represented as being jealously and instantly and fearfully noticed and visited, as friend or stranger among men might resent an insult shown him. This should be carefully considered; we are apt to act towards God and the things of God as towards a mere system, a law, a name, a religion, a principle, not as against a Person, a living, watchful, present, prompt and powerful Eye and Arm. That all this is a great error, is plain to all who study Scripture; as is sufficiently shown

by the death of that multitude of persons for looking into the ark—the death of the Prophet by the lion, who was sent to Jeroboam from Judah, and did not minutely obey the instructions given him—the slaughter of the children at Bethel by the bears, for mocking Elisha—the exclusion of Moses from the promised land, for smiting the rock twice—and the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira. Now Balaam's fault seems to have been of this nature. God told him distinctly not to go to Balak. He was rash enough to ask a second time, and God as a punishment gave him leave to ally himself with His enemies, and to take part against His people. With this presumptuousness and love of self in his innermost heart, his prudence, firmness, wisdom, illumination, and general conscientiousness, availed him nothing.

A number of reflections crowd upon the mind on the review of this awful history, as I may well call it; and with a brief notice of some of these I shall conclude.

1. First, we see how little we can depend, in judging of right and wrong, on the apparent excellence and high character of individuals. There *is* a right and a wrong in matters of conduct, in spite of the world; but it is the world's aim and Satan's aim to take our minds off from the indelible distinctions of things, and to fix our thoughts upon man, to make us the slaves of man, to make us dependent on his opinion, his patronage, his honour, his smiles, and his frowns. But if Scripture is to be our guide, it is quite plain that the most conscientious, religious, high-principled, honourable men (I use the words in their ordinary, not in their Scripture sense), may be on the side of evil, may be Satan's instruments

in cursing, if that were possible, and at least in seducing and enfeebling the people of God. For in the world's judgment, even when most refined, a person is conscientious and consistent, who acts up to his standard, *whatever that is*, not he only who aims at taking the highest standard. This is the world's highest flight; but in its ordinary judgment, a man is conscientious and consistent, who is only inconsistent and goes against conscience in any extremity, when hardly beset, and when he must cut the knot or remain in present difficulties. That is, *he* is thought to obey conscience, who only disobeys it when it is a praise and merit to obey it. This, alas! is the way with some of the most honourable of mere men of the world, nay of the mass of (so called) respectable men. They never tell untruths, or break their word, or profane the Lord's day, or are dishonest in trade, or falsify their principles, or insult religion, except in very great straits or great emergencies, when driven into a corner; and then perhaps they force themselves, as Saul did when he offered sacrifice instead of Samuel;—they force themselves, and (as it were) undergo their sin as a sort of unpleasant self-denial or penance, being ashamed of it all the while, getting it over as quickly as they can, shutting their eyes and leaping blindfold, and then forgetting it, as something which is bitter to think about. And if memory is ever roused and annoys them, they console themselves that after all they have only gone against their conscience now and then. This is their view of themselves and of each other, taken at advantage; and if any one come across them who has lived more out of the world than themselves, and has a

truer sense of right and wrong, and who fastens on some one point in them, which to his mind is a token and warning to himself against them, such a one seems of course narrow-minded and overstrict in his notions. For instance; supposing some such man had fallen in with Balaam, and had been privy to the history of his tempting God, it is clear that Balaam's general correctness, his nobleness of demeanour, and his enlightened view of duty, would not have availed one jot or tittle to overcome such a man's repugnance to him. He would have been startled and alarmed, and would have kept at a distance, and in consequence he would have been called by the world uncharitable and bigoted.

2. A second reflection which rises in the mind has relation to the wonderful secret providence of God, while all things seem to go on according to the course of this world. Balaam did not see the Angel, yet the Angel went out against him as an adversary. He had no open denunciation of God's wrath directed against him. He had sinned, and nothing happened outwardly, but wrath was abroad and in his path. *This* again is a very serious and awful thought. God's arm is not shortened. What happened to Balaam is as if it took place yesterday. God is what He ever was; we sin as man has ever sinned. We sin without being aware of it. God is our enemy without our being aware of it; and when the blow falls, we turn our thoughts to the creature, we ill-treat our ass, we lay the blame on circumstances of this world, instead of turning to Him. "Lord, when Thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see," in the next world if not here, "and be ashamed for their

envy at the people; yea the fire of Thine enemies shall devour them."[6]

3. Here too is a serious reflection, if we had time to pursue it, that when we have begun an evil course, we cannot retrace our steps. Balaam was forced to go with the men; he offered to draw back—he was not allowed—yet God's wrath followed him. This is what comes of committing ourselves to an evil line of conduct; and we see daily instances of it in our experience of life. Men get entangled, and are bound hand and foot in unadvisable courses. They make imprudent marriages or connexions; they place themselves in dangerous situations; they engage in unprofitable or harmful undertakings. Too often indeed they do not discern their evil plight; but when they do, they cannot draw back. God seems to say, "Go with the men." They are in bondage, and they must make the best of it; being the slave of the creature, without ceasing to be the responsible servants of God; under His displeasure, yet bound to act as if they could please Him. All this is very fearful.

4. Lastly, I will but say this in addition,—God gives us warnings now and then, but does not repeat them. Balaam's sin consisted in not acting upon what was told him *once for all.* In like manner, you, my brethren, now hear what you may never hear again, and what perchance in its substance is the word of God. You may never hear it again, though with your outward ears you hear it a hundred times, because you may be impressed with it now, but never may again. You may

[6] Isaiah xxvi. 11.

be impressed with it now, and the impression may die away; and some time hence, if you ever think about it, you may then speak of it thus,—that the view struck you at the time, but somehow the more you thought about it, the less you liked or valued it. True; this *may* be so, and it *may* arise, as you think, from the doctrine I have been setting before you not being true and scriptural; but it *may* also arise from your having heard God's voice and not obeyed it. It may be that you have become blind, not the doctrine been disproved. Beware of trifling with your conscience. It is often said that second thoughts are best; so they are in matters of judgment, but not in matters of conscience. In matters of duty first thoughts are commonly best—they have more in them of the voice of God. May He give you grace so to hear what has been said, as you will wish to have heard, when life is over; to hear in a practical way, with a desire to profit by it, to learn God's will, and to do it!

SERMON III.

Moral Consequences of Single Sins.

"*Be sure your sin will find you out.*"—NUMB. xxxii. 23.

THIS is one of those passages in the inspired writings, which, though introduced on a particular occasion and with a limited meaning, express a general truth, such as we seem at once to feel as being far greater than the context requires, and which we use apart from it. Moses warned the Reubenites and Gadites, that, if they, who had already been allotted their inheritance, did not assist their brethren in gaining theirs, their sin would find them out, or be visited on them. And, while he so spoke, He who spoke through him, God, the Holy Spirit, conveyed, as we believe, a deeper meaning under his words, for the edification of His Church to the end; viz., He intimated that great law of God's governance, to which all who study that governance will bear witness, that sin is ever followed by punishment. Day and night follow each other not more surely, than punishment comes upon sin. Whether the sin be great or little, momentary or habitual, wilful or through infirmity, its

own peculiar punishment seems, according to the law of nature, to follow, as far as our experience of that law carries us,—sooner or later, lighter or heavier, as the case may be.

We Christians indeed are under a Dispensation of grace, and are blessed with a certain suspension of this awful law of natural religion. The blood of Christ, as St. John says, is of such wonderful efficacy as to "cleanse us from all sin;" to interpose between our sin and its punishment, and to wipe out the former before the latter has overtaken us. This inestimable benefit is applied to our souls in various ways, according to God's inscrutable pleasure; and so far as this is the case, it supersedes or reverses the law of nature which has annexed suffering to disobedience. But, however effectually and extensively it is applied, still experience assures us that it is not yet vouchsafed to us in full measure and under all circumstances. It is an undeniable fact still, that penitents, however truly such, are not secured from the present consequences of their past offences, whether outward or inward, in mind, body, or estate. And we know that there are cases in which Christians fall away and do not repent again. Nay, we have reason for saying that those who sin after grace given, are, as such, in a worse state than if they had not received it. Great, then, as are our privileges under the Gospel, they in no degree supersede the force and the serious warning of the words in the text. Still it is true, and in many frightful ways, nay more so even than before Christ died, that our sin finds us out, and brings punishment after it, in due course; just as a stone falls

to the earth, or as fire burns, or as poison kills, as if by the necessary bond of cause and effect.

The text leads us to consider the consequences of a single sin, such as a breach of their engagement would have been in the Reubenites and Gadites; and to narrow the subject, I shall speak only of the moral consequences. Let us then consider the influence which single sins, past or present, may have on our present moral character in God's sight; how great it may be, will be plain from such reflections as the following:—

And first of all, it is natural to reflect on the probable influence upon us of sins committed in our childhood, and even infancy, which we never realized or have altogether forgotten. Ignorant as we may be when children begin to be responsible beings, yet we are ignorant also when they are not so; nor can we assign a date ever so early at which they certainly are not. And even the latest assignable date is very early; and thenceforward, whatever they do exerts, we cannot doubt, a most momentous influence on their character. We know that two lines starting at a small angle, diverge to greater and greater distances, the further they are produced; and surely in like manner a soul living on into eternity may be infinitely changed for the better or the worse by very slight influences exerted on it in the beginning of its course. A very slight deviation at setting out may be the measure of the difference between tending to hell and tending to heaven.

To give due weight to this thought, we should recollect that children's minds are impressible in a very

singular way, such as is not common afterwards. The passing occurrences which meet them, these, whether from their novelty or other cause, rest upon their imagination, as if they had duration; and days or hours, having to them the semblance, may do the work of years. Any one, on casting his thoughts back on his first years, may convince himself of this; the character, which his childhood bears in his memory as a whole, being traceable to a few external circumstances, which lasted through a very small portion of it, a certain abode, or a visit to some particular place, or the presence of certain persons, or some one spring or summer, —circumstances which he at first cannot believe to have been so transitory as on examination he finds they certainly were.

On the other hand, let it be observed, that we are certainly ignorant of a great deal that goes on in us in infancy and childhood; I mean our illnesses and sufferings as children, which we are either not conscious of at the time, or at any rate forget soon afterwards;—which yet are of a very serious nature, and while they must have a moral cause, known or unknown, must, one would think, have a moral effect also; and while they suggest by their occurrence the possibility of other serious things going on in us also, have moreover a natural tendency to affect us in some way or other. Mysterious as it is that infants and children should suffer pain, surely it is not less so that, when they come to years of reason, they should so forget it, as hardly to be able to believe, when told of it, that they themselves were the very sufferers; yet as sicknesses and accidents

then happening permanently affect their body, though they recollect nothing of them, there is no extravagance in the idea that passing sins then contracted and forgotten for ever afterwards, should so affect the soul as to cause those moral differences between man and man which, however originating, are too clear to be denied. And with this fearful thought before us of the responsibility attaching to the first years of our life, how miserable is it to reflect on the other hand that children are commonly treated as if they were not responsible, as if it did not matter what they did or were! They are indulged, humoured, spoiled, or at best neglected. Bad examples are set them; things are done or said before them, which they understand and catch up, when others least think it, and store in their minds, or act upon; and thus the indelible hues of sin and error are imprinted on their souls, and become as really part of their nature as that original sin in which they were born.

And what is true in infancy and childhood, is in its degree true in after life. Though our earliest years have especially the characteristic of being impressible by outward things, and of being unconscious or forgetful of them, yet at particular seasons afterwards, when the mind is excited, thrown out of its ordinary state, thrown for a while out of its subjection to habit, as if into that original unformed state when it was more free to choose good and evil, then in like manner it takes impressions, and those indelible ones, and withal almost unconsciously, after the manner of childhood. This is one reason why a time of trial is often such a crisis in a man's spiritual history. It is a season when the iron is heated and

malleable; one or two strokes serve to fashion it as a weapon for God or for Satan. Or in other words, if a man is then taken at unawares, an apparently small sin leads to consequences in years and ages to come so fearful, that one can hardly dare contemplate them. This may serve to make us understand the shortness and apparent simplicity of the trial which is sometimes represented in Scripture as sealing the fate of those who succumb to it; Saul's trial, for instance, or Esau's; as on the other hand, indefinitely great results may follow from one act of obedience, as Joseph's in resisting his master's wife, or David's in sparing the life of Saul. Such great occasions, good or evil, occur all through life, but especially in youth; and it were well if young persons would realize that they do occur and are momentous. Alas! what would they give afterwards, when they come to repent (not to speak of that most awful season, the future judgment, when they stand before God, and are shortly to enter heaven or hell), not to have done what in a moment of excitement they did—to recal the blasphemous avowal, or the guilty deed—to be what they then were and now are not, free to serve God, free from the brand and the yoke of Satan! How will they bitterly bewail that fascination, or delirium, or sophistry, which made them what they need not have been, had they used against it the arms which Christ gave them!

But to return:—to these single or forgotten sins, such as I have described them, are not improbably to be traced the strange inconsistencies of character which we often witness in our experience of life. I mean, you meet continually with men possessed of a number of good

points, amiable and excellent men, yet in one respect perhaps strangely perverted. And you cannot move them, or succeed at all with them, but must leave them as you find them. Perhaps they are weak and over-indulgent towards others, perhaps they are harsh, perhaps they are obstinate, perhaps they are perversely wedded to some wrong opinion, perhaps they are irresolute and undecided,—some fault or other they have, and you lament it, but cannot mend it, and are obliged to take them for what they are, and be resigned, however you may regret. Men are sometimes so good and so great, that one is led to exclaim, Oh that they were only a little better, and a little greater!

This indeed is all the difference between being a true saint of God, and a second rate or third rate Christian. Few men are great saints. There is always a something; I am not speaking of wilful or admitted sins—sins against the conscience (they of course exclude a man altogether from any hope), but of a defect of view and principle, a perversion of character. This is the common case even with the better sort of Christians; they are deformed in stature, they are not upright, they do not walk perfectly with God. And you cannot tell why it is;—they have ever lived religiously,—they have been removed from temptation, had good training and instruction, and they fulfil their calling, are good husbands or wives, good parents, good neighbours,—still when you come to know them well, there is in them this or that great inconsistency.

This consideration moreover tends to account for the strange way in which defects of character are buried in

a man. He goes on, for years perhaps, and no one ever discovers his particular failings, nor does he know them himself; till at length he is brought into certain circumstances, which bring them out. Hence men turn out so very differently from what was expected; and we are seldom able to tell beforehand of another, and scarcely ever dare we promise for ourselves, as regards the future. The proverb, for instance, says, power tries a man; so do riches, so do various changes of life. We find that after all, we do not know him, though we have been acquainted with him for years. We are disappointed, nay sometimes startled, as if he had almost lost his identity; whereas perchance it is but the coming to light of sins committed long before we knew him.

Again: single sins indulged or neglected are often the cause of other defects of character, which seem to have no connexion with them, but which after all are rather symptomatic of the former, than themselves at the bottom of the mischief. This is generally acknowledged as regards a sceptical temper of mind, which commonly is assailed by argument in vain, the root of the evil lying deeper, viz., in habits of vice, which however the guilty parties strenuously maintain to be quite a distinct matter, to relate to their conduct, and to have no influence whatever upon their reason or their opinions. And the same thing perhaps holds true in other cases; softness of mind and manner and false refinement may sometimes be the result of allowing ourselves in impure thoughts; or wanderings in prayer may have some subtle connexion with self-conceit; or passionateness may owe its power over us to indulgence, though

without excess, in eating and drinking. I am not connecting these several sins together as if in the way of cause and effect, but stating a connexion which sometimes holds in matter of fact, however we account for it.

Now I will proceed to consider the existence of single sins, and the state of persons labouring under them, in another point of view. I suppose there are few persons indeed, if any, but have some besetting sin or other, some infirmity, some temptation; and in resisting this lies their trial. Now a man may be very religious *all but* this one infirmity, and this one indulged infirmity may in consequence be producing most distressing effects on his spiritual state considered both in itself and in God's sight, without his being aware of it. Suppose, for instance, that a man is naturally resentful and unforgiving. He may, in spite of this, have a great number of excellences, very high views, very deeply seated principles, very great points, great self-devotion to God's service, great faith, great sanctity. I can fancy such a person almost arguing himself out of his own conviction, that he is fostering the secret sin in question, from his consciousness of his own integrity, and his devotional spirit in the general round of his duties. There are sins which when committed, so acutely distress the mind, that they are far less dangerous to it than their intrinsic heinousness would otherwise make them. Never must we undervalue of course the extreme misery and guilt of evil thoughts which are often indulged by the young; still afterwards they fill a person with remorse, and are clamorous for his repentance,

and before he repents they so burden him, that he has no ease, no satisfaction. He cannot go about his ordinary duties as before: and, while all this is felt, great as is their sinfulness, they strike no secret blow, but in a certain sense counteract their own effects. But far different is it with covetousness, conceit, ambition, or resentment, which is the particular sin I am speaking of. It may have ten thousand palliations; it may be disguised by fair names; it affects the conscience only now and then, for a moment, and that is all; the pang is soon over. The pang is momentary, but the ease and satisfaction and harmony of mind, arising from the person's exact performance of his general duties, are abiding guests within him. Whatever his duties are, this consciousness is with him: he is honest, just, temperate, self-denying; he mixes with others, and is perhaps meek and lowly, unassuming and affectionate, or, if need be, firm, clearsighted in matters of principle, zealous in conduct, pure in his motives. He enters God's house, and his heart responds to what he sees and hears there. He seems to himself to be able to say, "Thou, God, seest me!" as if he had no secret fault at all in his heart. He prays as calmly and seriously as before; he feels, as before, his heart drawn upwards by his Lord's history, or the Psalms of David. He is conscious to himself that he is not of this world. He humbly trusts that there is nothing in this world (through God's grace) that can tempt his heart from his God and Saviour. Do you not see how his imagination is affected by all this? he is in the main what he thinks he is; he thinks himself devoted to God in all active services, in all inward thoughts;

and so he is. He is not wrong in thinking so; but in spite of all this, he has just one fault in a different direction,—there is a fault out of sight. He forgets, that in spite of this harmony between all within and all without for twenty-three hours of the day, there is one subject, now and then recurring, which jars with his mind,—there is just one string out of tune. Some particular person has injured him or dishonoured him, and a few minutes of each day or of each week, are given to the indulgence of harsh, unforgiving thoughts, which at first he suspected were what they really are, sinful, but which he has gradually learned to palliate, or rather account for, on other principles, to refer to other motives, to justify on religious or other grounds. Solomon says, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour."[1] Alas! who can pretend to estimate the effect of this apparently slight transgression upon the spiritual state of any one of us? Who can pretend to say what the effect of it is in God's sight? What do the Angels think of it? What does our own guardian Angel, if one be vouchsafed us, who has watched over us, and been intimate with us from our youth up; who joyed to see how we once grew together with God's grace, but who now is in fear for us? Alas! what is the real condition of our heart itself? Dead bodies keep their warmth a short time; and who can tell but a soul so circumstanced may be severed from the grace of the Ordinances, though he partakes them outwardly, and is but existing upon

[1] Eccl. x. 1

and exhausting the small treasure of strength and life which is laid up within him? Nay, we know that so it really is, if the sin be deliberate and wilful; for the word of Scripture assures us that such sin shuts us out from God's presence, and obstructs the channels by which He gives us grace.

Consider again, how miserable a calamity may from such a cause be inflicted on a whole Church. The intercessions of the Saints are the life of the Church. The alms and good works, the prayers and fastings, the purity, the strict conscientiousness, the devotion of all true believers, high and low, are our safety and protection. When Satan then would afflict her in any of her branches, he begins doubtless by attempting to rob her of that in which her strength lies. He has gained a point whenever he can entangle religious persons in some deliberate sin, when he can rouse their pride, inflame their resentment, allure their covetousness, or feed their ambitious hopes. One sin is enough: his work is done, when he can put one single obstacle in their road; and there he leaves it, satisfied. And let it be observed, this applies both to the case of individuals and of the Church itself at a given time. For what we know, at this very time Satan may have succeeded in attaching some sin upon us as a people, which is working our destruction, in spite of whatever good points we may really have besides. Love of the world's good things, for instance, may be sufficient to ruin many graces. As to individuals, the case of Achan is quite in point, as you must well recollect. His one sin, secreting from among the spoils of Jericho a goodly Babylonish gar-

ment and some gold and silver, brought defeat upon the forces of Israel, and next death upon himself, and death upon his sons and his daughters. Let us not think that God's providence is materially different now, because we do not happen to see it. The chief difference between His dealings with Jews and with Christians is surely but this: they were visible to the one, to the other invisible. We do not *see* the effects of His wrath now as then, but they are as real, and more terrible as being proportioned to the greatness of the privileges abused.

And here I will notice another instance, as it may be considered, of a disobedience in one particular only, which sometimes consists with much excellence in other respects; that of separation or alienation from the Church. When we come across persons who have seceded from the Church, or who actively oppose her, or who disbelieve some of her doctrines, it may sometimes happen that we see so much of good principle and right conduct in them, as to be perplexed, and to begin to ask ourselves whether they can be very wrong in their opinions, or whether they themselves gain any harm from them. Now here let it be observed, I am speaking of those who go counter to the truth, when they might have known better. Again, I would not have you forget that the higher gifts of grace are altogether unseen, as well as the inflictions of God's wrath; but still let us speak of what *is* seen in those who deliberately oppose the Church. I say our imagination is likely to be affected by what appears in them of faith and holiness; and much more the imagination of the persons themselves, who often have no doubt whatever that they are

in God's favour. I repeat, I am speaking of those whom God sees to be wilful in their separation; and though we cannot know who are such, and therefore can pronounce judgment absolutely on no one, yet I would have all those who are thrown with persons who, being separatists, may be such, to bear in mind that their seeming to be holy and religious ever so much, does not prove they are really so, supposing they have this one secret sin chargeable upon them in God's books. Just as a man may be in good health, may have his arms and hands his own, his head clear, his mind active, and yet may just have one organ diseased, and the disease not at once appear, but be latent, and yet be mortal, bringing certain death in the event, so may it be with them. As, in the instance just now taken, a man may be upright and noble-minded, with a single purpose and a high resoluteness, kind and gentle, self-denying and charitable, and yet towards one certain individual may cherish feelings of revenge, and thereby show that some principle short of the love of God rules his heart,—so may it be with those who seem to be good men, and wilfully leave the Church. Their religious excellences, whatever these may be, are of no avail really against this or any other wilful sin.

To conclude. I have suggested but one or two thoughts on a very large subject, yet through God's mercy they may be useful. They must be useful, if they lead us to be frightened at ourselves. "Who can understand his errors?" says holy David. "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." And how awful is the

text, "Your sin will find you out!" Who can undertake to say for himself what and when have been his wilful sins, how frequently they recur, and how continually in consequence he is falling from grace! What need have we of a cleansing and a restoration day by day! What need have we of drawing near to God in faith and penitence, to seek from Him such pardon, such assurance, such strength, as He will vouchsafe to bestow! What need have we to continue in His presence, to remain under the shadow of His throne, to make use of all the means and expedients He allows us, to be steadfast in His Ordinances, and zealous in His precepts, lest we be found shelterless and helpless when He visits the earth!

Moreover, what constant prayers should we offer up to Him that He would be merciful to us in the dreadful day of judgment! It will indeed be a fearful moment when we stand before Him in the sight of men and Angels, to be judged according to our works! It will be fearful for ourselves and for all our friends. Then the day of grace will be over; prayers will not avail then, when the books are opened. Let us then plead for ourselves and for each other while it is called to-day. Let us pray Him, by the merits of His cross and passion, to have mercy on us, to have mercy on all we love, on all the Church; to pardon us, to reveal to us our sins, to give us repentance and amendment of life, to give us present grace, and to bestow on us, according to the riches of His love, future blessedness in His eternal kingdom.

SERMON IV.[1]

Acceptance of Religious Principles Compulsory.

"*And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*"—LUKE xiv. 23.

THE Parable of the Great Supper, from which these words are taken, is found also in St. Matthew's Gospel, with this especial addition, that of the guests thus brought in by force, one was found not having on a wedding garment, who in consequence was not simply dismissed as unworthy, but condemned to punishment. "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; for many are called but few are chosen."[2] "Friend, *how* camest thou in hither?" You may suppose he might have answered, "I was forced in;" but our Saviour says, "And he was speechless," and pronounces his everlasting punishment.

Surely, there is something very awful and startling in the doctrine thus contained in the Parable. It would

[1] This Sermon was not originally written for a Parish.

[2] Matt. xxii. 12–14.

seem from thence that we are compelled to accept of religious advantages, for the use of which we are answerable, for the misuse of which we shall be condemned. We are compelled to become Christians, yet this compulsion is not taken into account when the day of reckoning comes. The same doctrine is implied in the parable of the talents. The servant who hid his lord's talent, seems to have had some such thoughts about fairness and justice, as the natural man so often indulges in now,—some idea of being quits and even with him, if he left his gift alone,—as if he could wash his hands (as it is said) of the whole business, and venture neither the gain nor the loss; feeling that it was a delicate matter that was put upon him, that there was great risk of failing, that his lord was an austere kind of man, hard to please, having his own views of right and duty, and unreasonable; and that, consequently, it was safest to keep aloof, to have no cares on any score, and so escape the danger. But here again this selfish reasoner is met by the same stern necessity, so to call it. The law of his nature is urged upon him, by the Creator of that law; a sort of uncontrollable destiny is represented as encompassing him; the destiny of accountableness, the fate of being free, the unalienable prerogative of choosing between life and death, the inevitable prospect of heaven and hell. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."[3]— "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."[4]

And so again of Judas our Lord says, "*Woe* unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. It had

[3] Luke xix. 22. [4] Matt. xxv. 30.

been good for that man if he had not been born." Yet he was born, he was suffered to betray, and he was condemned.

The same is the doctrine of the Old Testament; as, for example, in the memorable words in the prophet Ezekiel, in which Almighty God says to the Israelites, "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."[5]

Now, before proceeding to observe upon this very solemn and certain truth (certain if Scripture is true), I would entreat you to consider *who it is* who has propounded it in the parable in question. It is our Lord Christ. Here, as in other places, He has not left to His servants,—He has taken upon Himself (what may be called) the responsibility, I might even say the odium, of declaring startling doctrines. Consider then His words and works, as displayed in the Gospels. Is He not the author of a religion which we every day hear called, and most truly called, mild, beneficent, charitable, and cheering? Is not His own character, as the common voice of all men proclaims, most meek, gentle, considerate, and loving? Can any one read the history of His life and death without being himself convinced of the truth of this universal judgment? much more,

[5] Ez. xx. 32–37.

can any one in any degree enter into the depths of the gracious doctrine of the Atonement, His expiation of sin on the Cross, without possessing a clear assurance that there is nothing in the whole world that can be done for us which He has not done and will not do? Yet He it is who leaves us under this bond. By His sighs and tears then, by His toilsome wanderings, by His earnest speeches, by His agony and death, by all He has done, all He has suffered, He seems to entreat us to have confidence in Him; He condescends to entreat us to take on trust the truth and the equity of His words, when He declares that we are compelled to receive God's mercies, yet punished for the misuse of them.

Now I shall enlarge somewhat upon the general state of the case, and then show how Christians are especially interested in it.

1. In the first place, consider what first of all presents itself to our thoughts, our birth into the world. Allow that this is a world of enjoyment, yet unquestionably it is a world of care and pain also. Most men will judge that the pain on the whole exceeds the enjoyment on the whole. But, whether this be so or not with most men, even if there be *one* man in the whole world who thinks so, that is enough for my purpose. It is enough for my purpose, if only there be one person to be found, who thinks sickness, disappointment, anxiety, affliction, suffering, fear, to be such grievous ills, that he had rather not have been born. If this be the sentiment only of one man, that one man, it is plain, is, as regards his very existence, what the Christian is relatively to

his new birth, an unwilling recipient of a gift. We are not asked, whether we will choose this world, before we are born into it. We are brought under the yoke of it, whether we will or no; since we plainly cannot choose or not choose before the power of choice is bestowed on us, this gift of a mortal nature.

This is one of the thoughts which to the pride of reflecting but irreligious minds is sometimes a stumbling block. Arrogant, impatient, rebellious hearts, finding themselves possessed of this gift of life and reason, fight against what they cannot undo—they turn it against itself, and argue against it by means of it. They beat and break themselves fruitlessly against the destiny to which they are chained; and since they cannot annul their creation, they think to revenge themselves by blasphemously rising against their Creator. "Why am I made? why cannot I annihilate myself? why must I suffer?" Such as these are the questions with which they fatigue themselves; sometimes even rushing out of life by self-inflicted violence, from the frantic hope that perchance they have power over their own being. And when they have committed that fatal deed, and find themselves, as assuredly they do, still sentient, conscious, independent beings, with their own thoughts and wills and tastes and judgments, who can imagine the horror that possesses them in that their new state of existence? the horror of finding themselves without bodies, without any thing to touch, any thing to turn upon, and wreak their fury upon, with nothing but themselves,—without bodies, yet living, living without aught of power over the principle of their life, which

rests upon the will of Him alone, who called them into being, and whom they have blasphemed!

Or sometimes this want of resignation takes another turn. Many there are who, without thus rising against the will of God, yet will not admit that it is their duty to serve Him *under* that dispensation, whatever it is, to which He has chosen to subject them, that they are accountable for what they do, and must bring forth from within, by the power of their will, what may duly respond to the circumstances in which they stand. Accordingly, they deliberately and on principle suffer themselves to be borne down the stream of life passively, by whatever happens to them. Does temptation come to them? they yield to it; does danger? they are cowards; inducements to virtue? they are virtuous; is religion in fashion? they take up a profession; in no case entering into the simple and momentous truth, that the circumstances which come upon them, are matters external both to their own choice and their responsibility,—are but conditions appointed by Almighty God, under which they find themselves placed (why, it boots not to inquire), and which it is their wisdom to take as such, to take, use, and improve.

I have noticed these instances of want of resignation, not for their own sake, but in order to illustrate, by the contrast, that law of our birth, of which I am speaking, viz., that we are brought, without our consent being asked, into a certain state of things, into a life of suffering, and of moral discipline; and are imperatively required to obey God *under it*, as if we had brought ourselves into it, on the pain of fearful consequences, if we do not.

2. Such is our condition as men; it is the same as Christians. For instance, we are not allowed to grow up before choosing our religion. We as little choose our religion as we choose to be born. It is done for us without our having part in it. We are baptized in infancy. Our sponsors promise for us. Now considering how great on the one hand the privileges of Baptism are, and on the other how great the risk of resisting and abusing them, this is a very serious thought. St. Paul's words about the danger of quenching the gift of grace are decisive—"It is impossible (he says) for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."[6]

Now I can fancy a person saying, who had fallen into sin, "O that I had never been baptized! O that I did not incur this great risk! O that the one Baptism once applied for the remission of sins were yet to come! O that I had not already had that cleansing once for all, and were quit of the necessity of striving continually to keep myself in the state into which I have been brought!" But this cannot be; we are Christians from our earliest years, we can decline neither the great privilege nor the responsibility of it; and, instead of shrinking from the responsibility, rather we must comfort ourselves with the privilege, with the contemplation of the fulness of the aid given us to help us in all our trials; and, thus encouraged, we must go on to co-operate with God manfully.

[6] Heb. vi. 4–6

So again with respect to our education. We are brought up as Christians. We may not, we cannot stand aloof, and say we will keep our judgment unbiassed, and decide for ourselves. We find ourselves *Christians;* and our duty is, not to consider what we should do if we were not Christians,—not to go about disputing, sifting the evidence for Christianity, weighing this side or that, —but to act upon the rules given us, till we have reason to think them wrong, and to bring home to ourselves the truth of them, as we go on, *by* acting upon them,—by their fruits on ourselves. Heathens indeed may be bound to go into the question of evidences, but our duty is to use the talents of which we find ourselves possessed, and to essay their genuineness by deeds, not by arguments.

These are instances (such as I proposed to give) of our being forced into the possession of certain advantages or disadvantages, and being obliged to act up to this our state, to co-operate with it, according to the inward power given us, instead of drawing back from it. You see how parallel the Christian method is to that of nature. God appoints us by nature to be the sons of sinful Adam, responsible beings, with never-dying souls, —by force, as it were; and by means of the Church, in like manner, He gives us the Sacrament of the new birth, and educates us in right principles, whether we will or no.

3. But this compulsion on the part of the Church is still more urgent and extensive than I have yet mentioned, and it may be right therefore to give a few additional instances of it, in order to impress upon your minds the principle on which it is founded.

First, then, I will instance the remarkable fact, that (as it appears) whole households were baptized by the Apostles, which must include slaves as well as children It would seem that grown persons, if dependent on the master of the house, were, on his conversion, made partakers of his privileges and his duties. This was so ordered in the Old Testament, in the case of Abraham, whose circumcision was followed, by divine command, by the circumcision of his servants with him; "all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger."[7] In like manner we read in the Acts, that when Lydia was converted, not only she herself was baptized, but, almost as *a matter of course* (for such is the impression conveyed by the sacred narrative), "her household"[8] was baptized also. Again, when the jailor at Philippi is baptized, it is not only he, but "he and all his straightway." Again, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul speaks of having baptized "the household of Stephanas."[9] The circumstances and conditions requisite for this procedure, and the limitations by which it was guarded, need not here be considered; I wish merely to point out the principle involved in the procedure itself.

Another remarkable instance of the force which was put upon men by the early Church, will be found in the then existing usage of bringing such as had the necessary gifts to ordination, without asking their consent. The primitive Christians looked upon Ordination very differently (alas for ourselves!) very differently from this age. Now the ministerial office is often regarded as a

[7] Gen. xvii. 27. [8] Acts xvi. 15, 33. [9] 1 Cor. i. 16.

profession of this world,—a provision, a livelihood; it is associated in men's minds with a comparatively easy, or at least not a troubled life,—with respectability and comfort, a competency, a position in society. Alas for us! we feel none of those terrors about it, which made the early Christians flee from it! But in their eyes (putting aside the risk of undertaking it in times of persecution) it was so solemn a function, that the holier a man was, the less inclined he felt to undertake it. They felt that it was in some sort to incur the responsibility of other men, and to be put in trust with their salvation; they felt it was scarcely possible to engage in it, without the risk of being besprinkled with the blood of ruined souls. They understood somewhat of St. Paul's language when he said that necessity was laid upon him, and woe to him unless he preached the Gospel. In consequence they shrank from the work, as though (to use a weak similitude) they had been bid dive down for pearls at the bottom of the sea, or scale some precipitous and dizzy cliff. True, they knew that abundance of heavenly aid would be given them, according to their need; but they knew also, that even if any part of the work was to be their own, though they were only called on to co-operate with God, that was in such a case fearful undertaking enough. So they literally fled away in many instances, when they were called to the sacred office; and the Church as literally took them by force, and (after the precedent of St. Paul's own conversion) laid necessity upon them.

Once more, consider the conduct of the Church from the very first time any civil countenance was extended

towards it, and you will have a fresh instance of this constraining principle of which I speak. What are national conversions, such as took place in the middle ages, when kings submitted to the Gospel and their people followed, but going out into the highways and hedges, and compelling men to come in? And though we can conceive cases in which this urgency was unwisely, over-strongly, unseasonably, or too extensively applied, yet the principle of it is no other than that of the Baptism of households mentioned in the Acts. Again, what was it but this religious and charitable force (so to call it) which once guarded the true doctrine with state penalties, and made a man think twice and thrice before he rashly uttered any light words, or promulgated any heterodox tenet? a public duty, which is now altogether neglected, from the abuse of it in certain times and places, and the proneness of men on a re-action to run from one extreme into another.

4. And now let me notice, in conclusion, the light which the law of Providence I have been explaining casts upon the circumstances and mode in which one other ordinance of the Church is administered,—I mean Confirmation. Though in some respects individual Christians are always under the constraining power of the Church, yet as life goes on, they are more and more withdrawn from it; and, compared with what they were in childhood, they may at a certain time be called free men. They enjoy no longer, at least in the same sense as before, the privilege and mercy of being dependent. Confirmation is the last act on the part of the Church before she parts with them. She blesses them, and sends them out

from the home of their youth to seek their fortunes in the world. She ends her constraint of them by a blessing; she blesses them by force and lets them go. They are sent to receive it by their friends; they submit, and are then set free. O my brethren, both young and old, this is an awful thought,—a most affecting thought, indeed, to those who witness a Confirmation, but a most awful thought to those who take part in it. You who have the care of young people, see to it that you bring them to be confirmed; let not the time slip by; let them not get too old. Why? because then you cannot bring them; the time of constraint is passed; they are their own masters. But you will say that you may perhaps still have influence with your children and dependents, and can get them to come, though they be past age. O but what if we be not willing to receive them? So perchance it may be. I mean, that when a man or woman is grown, much more is required of them than before, and they less likely to be able to answer it. When persons are young, before their minds are formed, ere they have sullied their baptismal robe, and contracted bad habits, this is the time for Confirmation, which conveys to them grace whereby they may perform that "good work" which Baptism has begun in them. But when they have gone into the world,—whatever their age be, for it varies in different persons,—when they have begun the war with world, flesh, and devil, when their minds are now grown into some determinate shape, and much more when they have wilfully sinned in any gross way, are they likely to be fitly prepared for Confirmation, even if they are persuaded to offer themselves?

When a grown person comes coldly, and indifferently, and merely because his friends send him to us, can we, ministers of Christ, receive him? Can we receive, as if being in a mere negative state, one who, as being of mature years, ought to be mature in his religious principles also? Beware, then, all who have the care of the young, lest you let slip the time of bringing them for God's grace, when you can bring them, for it will not return. Bring them while their hearts are tender: they may escape from you, and you may not be able to reclaim them.

On the other hand, the same considerations come home with greater force to the young themselves: it is their own concern. They who are of an age to be confirmed should come to be confirmed at once, lest they get too old to be confirmed,—I mean lest they be first confirmed in another way, a way which will keep them from this holy confirmation, lest they receive that miserable confirmation, which those have who rush into sin,—the touch of this infectious world, and the imposition of the devil's hand upon them. You do not know yourselves, my brethren; you cannot answer for yourselves; you cannot trust your own promises about yourselves; you do not know what will become of you, unless you receive the gifts of grace *when* they are offered. They are, as it were, forced upon you now. If you put them from you, doubtless you can in this case overcome that force, you can be stronger than God's mercy. You may put off this holy ordinance, because you do not at present like a strict religious life,—because you take no interest in your eternal prospects. Alas! for what you know, you

will be taking a step never to be retrieved. This blessed means of grace, perchance would change your heart and will, and make you love God's service. But the season once lost will never return. Year after year may pass, and you will be further and further from God. Perhaps you will rush into open and wilful sin: perhaps not; but still without loving God at all the more. Your heart may be upon the world; you may pass through life in a cold, unbelieving, narrow spirit, with no high aims, no love of things invisible, no love of Christ your Saviour. This will be the end of your refusing the loving compulsion of Almighty God:—slavery to this world, and to the god of this world. God save us all, young and old, from this, through Jesus Christ.

SERMON V.

Reliance on Religious Observances.

"*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.*"—LUKE xvii. 10.

IF, when we have done all, we are unprofitable, what are we when we have but a part? and then again, what are we, if that part itself be defective, and defiled with evil? There is no sort of question then, that if *reason* is to be judge, there can be no boasting towards God even on the part of His most matured saints and exactest servants. There can, I say, be no boasting, because whatever we do is the fruit of His grace, and because we do very little, and because, in spite of His grace, what we do is infected with sin, and because even if we did all, we should be doing no more than we are bound to do. I cannot conceive any one who fairly gave his mind to consider the matter, whatever weight he might give to this or that consideration in particular, however disposed he might be to exalt his natural powers, or his actual services, not coming after all to this conclusion,—to this conclusion in the judgment of *reason*.

And yet, it will be said, there are many persons in

the world who are well pleased with what they are and what they do, who are well satisfied with themselves, who think themselves in so fair a way for attaining heaven, that they need not give themselves any extraordinary trouble about it; who are what is commonly called self-righteous. Now I do not allow that those *are* self-righteous necessarily who are *called* so, because there is among us much unfair and harsh judging of the feelings and motives of others; but still after all there *is* a state of mind which is self-righteous,—I mean a state of mind in which a person has no serious fears of future judgment, and is well satisfied with himself. Certainly; but this is no objection to what I have been saying, for you will find this to arise from persons *not* thinking of God. What I said just now was, that no one who thinks seriously of Almighty God and himself, can pride himself on his services; but this is what men in general cannot bring themselves steadily to do. Self-righteous men are men who live to the world, and do not think of God. They do not think of judgment as sure to come one day or another. They have no fears for the future, because they have no prospect about the future. They are contented with the present, and with themselves, because they live in what is visible and tangible, and do not measure themselves by what is unseen and spiritual. "They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise . . . for not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."[1] Worldly men are self-righteous men.

[1] 2 Cor. x. 12, 18.

Another class of self-righteous men are they who do not believe in the Divinity and Atonement of Christ. These men, again, do not really measure themselves by a heavenly standard and by God's judgment; they measure themselves merely by their own conscience, and their conscience is dark and blind. They have low and narrow views of duty.

Once more, men who fasten their minds on any particular object of religion short of God, become self-righteous, for they narrow the field of duty, and make this object the measure of it. Hence, whether men make benevolent schemes and exertions to be the whole of their religion, or ceremonial observances, or maintenance of true doctrine, or obedience to any other portion of God's law, they are insensibly led to be satisfied with their own doings, both because of the vivid consciousness which this prominent object creates in them, that religion is their chief employment, and because of the persuasion which readily comes on them that they duly act up to it. Such was the case of the Pharisee in the parable. And if this is true in the case of objects and observances good in themselves, much more will it happen when men place their religion in such things as are not so;—the main fault in all cases being this, that the persons in question, instead of thinking anxiously of God and His law, think only of a portion of it, which they have of themselves set apart, and make it a sort of idol. On the whole, then, what I have said is true, that in spite of the existence of self-righteous men in fact, no one can really think himself meritorious in God's sight, who comes seriously to consider himself and God, apparent

exceptions being those cases in which persons do not think duly of either.

This I consider to be the real state of the case; however, the popular view of spiritual pride or self-righteousness is this, that those men are self-righteous, or in great danger of being so, who come often to Church, and are diligent in their moral duties. Now this is the point on which I consider that there is a great deal of unfair and uncharitable judgment among us, persons being said to be satisfied with themselves who are really not so. However, our business is, when the world blames and slanders us, not to be vexed at it, but rather to consider whether there is any foundation for it, any truth at bottom, though there be exaggeration and mistake. I conceive a person may always gain good to his own soul, gain instruction and useful suggestions, by the mistakes of the world about him. Now then let us consider, from this hint given us by ignorant and prejudiced men, whether we, who are blessed so frequently as we are with the ordinances of the Gospel, with the privilege of Prayer and Holy Communion, are or are not in any special danger of spiritual pride, or as of late years it has been called, self-righteousness.

Now of course there *is* a danger of persons becoming self-satisfied, in being regular and exemplary in devotional exercises; there is danger, which others have not, of their so attending to them as to forget that they have other duties to attend to. I mean the danger, of which I was just now speaking, of having their attention drawn off from other duties by their very attention to this duty in particular. And what is still most likely of all,

persons who are regular in their devotions may be visited with passing thoughts every now and then, that they are thereby better than other people; and these occasional thoughts may secretly tend to make them self-satisfied, without their being aware of it, till they have a latent habit of self-conceit and contempt of others. Such cases certainly are possible or probable; in none of them do persons actually rely on their merit, or boastfully plead their services in God's sight; but still those services do seem to be a snare to them, leading some of them to forget how far they are from perfection on the whole, and how much they sin; leading others to forget that they have other duties also to do; and encouraging others again in a quiet, unobtrusive self-complacency, while they still acknowledge themselves to be sinners. What is done statedly forces itself upon the mind, impresses the memory and imagination, and seems to be a *substitute* for other duties; and what is contained in definite outward acts has a completeness and tangible form about it, which is likely to *satisfy* the mind. I do not deny then there is some danger, lest persons who are frequent in devotional services should be as the Pharisees,—do nothing else, and be well contented that they do so much. Accordingly you may hear ill-natured persons, or scoffers, say severe things against those who are strict in their religious observances, as if in other respects they were *worse* than others, or were hypocritical. All this is but the language of the world, and not to be believed; still I do not deny that persons who are frequent in prayers and other religious exercises should be jealous over themselves, and not take for

granted they are going on right, particularly since their very strictness is a call on them for a more exact observance of their other duties. But all this is quite a different matter, from such danger being an *objection* to observing devotional duties. If there is a danger, let it be watched and prevented, but let not the observance be omitted: there are few things which are not dangerous. All things may be perverted and abused. The great lesson set before us in the Gospel is to use the world without abusing it, and in like manner to use *God's mercies* without abusing them. If frequent attendance at the Lord's Table or at prayers leads, unless we are watchful, to spiritual pride, our duty is *to be* watchful, not to omit attendance.

However, I do not think, after all, that there *is* any very great danger to a serious mind in the frequent use of these great privileges. Indeed, it were a strange thing to say that the simple performance of what God has told us to do *can* do harm to any but those who have not the love of God in their hearts, and to such persons all things are harmful; *they* pervert every thing into evil. It is impossible (praised be God!) that earnest and humble minds should derive any thing from Christ's ordinances but those high and ineffable blessings which are lodged in them. Christ's gifts are not snares, but mercies. Let us then see how this danger, which I have allowed to exist in devotional observances, is counteracted in the case of serious minds.

1. Now, first, the evil in question (supposing it to exist) is singularly adapted to be its own corrective. It can only do us injury when we do not know its exist-

ence. When a man knows and feels the intrusion of self-satisfied and self-complacent thoughts, here is something at once to humble him and destroy that complacency. To know of a weakness is always humbling; now humility is the very grace needed here. To know we are passionate, or slothful, or severe, is indeed the first step towards removing such defects, but does not directly tend to remove them. Knowledge of our indolence does not encourage us to exertion, but induces despondence; but to know we are self-satisfied is a direct blow to self-satisfaction. There is no satisfaction in perceiving that we are self-satisfied. No one can be self-righteous who knows and laments his proud thoughts; but a person may be slothful who knows and laments that he is slothful. Here then is one great safeguard against our priding ourselves on our observances. Evil thoughts do us no harm, if recognized, if repelled, if protested against by the indignation and self-reproach of the mind. It is when we do not discern them, when we admit them, when we cherish them, that they ripen into principles. And if this is true of all bad thoughts, much more is it of those now spoken of, which humble us on their detection as much as they elate us on their first entrance. I do not deny that the intrusion of such vain and foolish thoughts takes off from the comfort of our devotion, when they occur; but that is another matter. The question is not about comfort, but about mischief. It is no good reason for giving over devotional exercises, that we have not all the comfort from them which we might have.

2. But again, if religious persons are troubled with

proud thoughts about their own excellence and strictness, I think it is only when they are young in their religion, and that the trial will wear off; and that for many reasons. I would not indeed speak with undue decision on such a point,—every one has his particular temptations; yet one should hardly think that any but minds very young in the faith, minds to whom religion was a new thing, would pride themselves on their performances or rest upon them,—I mean, would even have the temptation to do so; for surely it does not require much keenness of spiritual sight to see how very far our best is from what it should be. Satisfaction with our own doings, as I have said, arises from fixing the mind on some *one part* of our duty, instead of attempting the whole of it. In proportion as we narrow the field of our duties, we become able to compass them. Men who pursue only this duty or only that duty, are in danger of self-righteousness;—zealots, bigots, devotees, men of the world, sectarians, are for this reason self-righteous. For the same reason, persons beginning a religious course are self-righteous, though they often think themselves just the reverse. They consider, perhaps, all religion to lie in confessing themselves sinners, and having warm feelings concerning their redemption and justification,—in having what they consider faith; and, as all this is fulfilled in them, they come to think they have attained and are sure of heaven; and all because they have so very contracted a notion of the range of God's commandments, of the rounds of that ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. And in the same way, I admit that religious persons who for one reason or another are led

to begin a greater strictness than hitherto in their devotional observances, in attending prayers or the Lord's Supper, or in fasting, or in almsgiving, are, on beginning, in some danger of becoming self-satisfied; for the same reason,—as fixing their minds on one certain portion of their duty and becoming excited about *it;* and this the more, inasmuch as the observances in question are something definite and precise, and on the other hand are evidently neglected by others.

But the remedy of the evil is obvious, and one which, since it will surely be applied by every religious person, because he *is* religious, will, under God's grace, effect in no long time a cure. Try to do your *whole* duty, and you will soon cease to be well-pleased with your religious state. If you are in earnest, you will try to add to your faith virtue; and the more you effect, the less will you seem to yourself to do. On the other hand, attend prayer and the Holy Eucharist without corresponding strictness in other matters; and it is plain what will follow, from the nature of the human mind, without going to more solemn considerations. The more you neglect your daily, domestic, relative, temporal, duties, the more you will prize yourself on your (I cannot call them religious, your) formal, ceremonial observances. Thus it is plain that self-satisfaction is the feeling either of a beginner, or of a very defective and negligent Christian.

3. But this is not all. Certainly this objection, that devotional practices, such as prayer, fasting, and communicating, tend to self-righteousness, is the objection of those, or at least is just what the objection of those

would be, who never attempted them. Men speak as if it was the easiest thing in the world to fast and pray, and do austerities, and as if such courses were the most seductive, easiest, pleasantest, methods of attaining heaven. I do not deny that there are certain states of society, certain ages and countries, in which they are much easier than in others; but this is true of all duties We, for instance, of this day, find *manliness* and *candour* as easy as some eastern nations might find fasting and meditation. But that is not the question. We are what we are,—Englishmen; and for us who are active in our habits and social in our tempers, fasting and meditation have no such great attractions, and are of no such easy observance. When then an objector fears lest such observances should make him self-righteous, were he to attempt them, I do think he is over-anxious, over-confident in his own power to fulfil them; he trusts too much in his own strength already, and, depend on it, to attempt them would make him less self-righteous, not more so. He need not be so very fearful of being too good; he may assure himself that the smallest of his Lord's commandments are to a spiritual mind solemn, arduous, and inexhaustible. Is it an easy thing to pray? It *is* easy to wait for a rush of feelings, and then to let our petitions be borne upon them; and never to attempt the duty till then; but it is not at all easy to be in the habit day after day and hour after hour, in all frames of mind, and under all outward circumstances, to bring before God a calm, collected, awakened soul. It is not at all easy to keep the mind from wandering in prayer, to keep out all intrusive thoughts about other things. It

is not at all easy to realize what we are about, who is before us, what we are seeking, and what our state is. It is not at all easy to throw off the world and to understand that God and Christ hear us, that Saints and Angels are standing by us, and the devil desiring to have us. What indeed *is* after all meant, by asserting that regular and stated prayers are dangerous to a sensitive and serious mind? They are dangerous to the blind and formal; but so all things are; but where is the really serious mind that will say it is easy to take delight in stated prayer, to attend to it duly? Is not at the best our delight in it transient, and our attention irregular? Is all this satisfactory and elating?

And so again of austerities; there may be persons so constituted by nature as to take pleasure in mortifications for their own sake, and to be able to practise them adequately; and *they* certainly *are* in danger of practising them for their own sakes, not through faith, and of becoming spiritually proud in consequence: but surely it is idle to speak of this as an ordinary danger.

And so again a religious mind has a perpetual source of humiliation from *this* consciousness also, viz., how far his *actual conduct in the world* falls short of the profession which his devotional observances involve. It is not a pleasant, not an inspiring, not an elating reflection, to think that you are making a profession which you must in some measure dishonour by your daily imperfections. There is nothing flattering and soothing in the thought that you are inviting the world to criticise you, and preparing it to expect more than it will find; to say nothing of the more bitter feelings which the professions

and the vows of obedience, made in Church and broken in the world, cost you when thought of in God's sight. Alas! is it at all a comfort to add to the catalogue of those sins which we must answer for in the Last Day? yet this we must do, or at least run the risk of it, if we attempt those services which some persons would persuade us necessarily tend to self-righteousness.

4. But, after all, what is this shrinking from responsibility, which fears to be obedient lest it should fail, but cowardice and ingratitude? What is it but the very conduct of the Israelites, who, when Almighty God bade them encounter their enemies and so gain Canaan, feared the sons of Anak, because they were giants? To fear to do our duty lest we should become self-righteous in doing it, is to be wiser than God; it is to distrust Him; it is to do and to feel like the unprofitable servant who hid his Lord's talent, and then laid the charge of his sloth on his Lord, as being a hard and austere man. At best we are unprofitable servants when we have done all; but if we are but unprofitable when we do our best to be profitable, what are we, when we fear to do our best, but unworthy to be His servants at all? No! to *fear* the *consequences* of obedience is to be worldly-wise, and to go by reason when we are bid go by faith. Let us dare to do His commandments, leaving to Him to bring us through, who has imposed them. Let us risk dangers which cannot in truth be realized, however they threaten, since He has bid us risk them, and will protect us in them. Let us bear, what probably will befal us, the assaults of Satan, the sins of infirmity, the remains of the old

Adam, involuntary mistakes, the smarting of our wounds, and the dejection and desolateness ensuing, if it be His will. He has promised to lead us safely heavenward, in spite of all things being against us; He will keep us from all wilful sin: but the infirmities which beset us, our ignorances, waywardnesses, weaknesses, and misconceptions, these He still ordains should try us and humble us, should move in us vexation of spirit and self-abasement, and should bring us day by day to the foot of His Cross for pardon. Let us then compose ourselves, and bear a firm and courageous heart. Let us steel ourselves, not against self-reproach and self-hatred, but against unmanly fear. Let us feel what we really are,—sinners attempting great things, and succeeding at best only so far as to show that we do attempt them. Let us simply obey God's will, whatever may befall; whether it tend to elate us or to depress us, what is that to us? He can turn all things to our eternal good. He can bless and sanctify even our infirmities. He can lovingly chastise us, if we be puffed up, and He can cheer us when we despond. He can and will exalt us the more we afflict ourselves; and we shall afflict ourselves the more, in true humbleness of mind, the more we really obey Him. Blessed are they who in any matter do His will; and they are thrice blessed who, in what they are doing, are also interesting themselves, as in the case which has been under our consideration, in His special sacramental promises. Blessed indeed are they, who, while obeying God, are seeking Christ; who, while they do a duty, receive a privilege; who commemorate His death be-

cause He bids them, and while they do so gain the virtue of it in the very commemoration; who live in Him, both in the thought of Him and the possession of Him; who glory in Him who died for them, and was buried, and rose again, and now lives in their hearts; who are willing to take their part with Him, in suffering as in joy; who willingly associate themselves in that Mysterious Communion which He offers them, and which, though it brings glory in the end, brings suffering and affliction at present,—which makes them at present in a special way heirs of tears and pain and disappointment and reproach, heirs of special trials which may come upon them though they live in the most peaceful times, which may come without the world perceiving that they differ in their lot from other men, trials which work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and which in the present world are recompensed by the faith, humility, patience, and gentleness resulting from them.

SERMON VI.

The Individuality of the Soul.

"*The spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.*"—ECCLES. xii. 7.

HERE we are told that upon death the spirit of man returns to God. The sacred writer is not speaking of good men only, or of God's chosen people, but of men generally. In the case of all men, the soul, when severed from the body, returns to God. God gave it: He made it, He sent it into the body, and He upholds it there; He upholds it in distinct existence, wherever it is. It animates the body while life lasts; it returns again, it relapses into the unseen state upon death. Let us steadily contemplate this truth, which at first sight we may fancy we altogether enter into. The point to be considered is this, that every soul of man which is or has been on earth, has a separate existence; and that, in eternity, not in time merely,—in the unseen world, not merely in this,—not only during its mortal life, but ever from the hour of its creation, whether joined to a body of flesh or not.

Nothing is more difficult than to realize that every man has a distinct soul, that every one of all the

millions who live or have lived, is as whole and independent a being in himself, as if there were no one else in the whole world but he. To explain what I mean: do you think that a commander of an army realizes it, when he sends a body of men on some dangerous service? I am not speaking as if he were wrong in so sending them; I only ask in matter of fact, does he, think you, commonly understand that each of those poor men has a soul, a soul as dear to himself, as precious in its nature, as his own? Or does he not rather look on the body of men collectively, as one mass, as parts of a whole, as but the wheels or springs of some great machine, to which he assigns the individuality, not to each soul that goes to make it up?

This instance will show what I mean, and how open we all lie to the remark, that we do not understand the doctrine of the distinct individuality of the human soul. We class men in masses, as we might connect the stones of a building. Consider our common way of regarding history, politics, commerce, and the like, and you will own that I speak truly. We generalize, and lay down laws, and then contemplate these creations of our own minds, and act upon and towards them, as if they were the real things, dropping what are more truly such. Take another instance: when we talk of national greatness, what does it mean? Why, it really means that a certain distinct definite number of immortal individual beings happen for a few years to be in circumstances to act together and one upon another, in such a way as to be able to act upon the world at large, to gain an ascendancy over the world, to gain power and wealth, and to

look like one, and to be talked of and to be looked up to as one. They seem for a short time to be some one thing: and we, from our habit of living by sight, regard them as one, and drop the notion of their being any thing else. And when this one dies and that one dies, we forget that it is the passage of separate immortal beings into an unseen state, that the whole which appears is but appearance, and that the component parts are the realities. No, we think nothing of this; but though fresh and fresh men die, and fresh and fresh men are born, so that the whole is ever shifting, yet we forget all that drop away, and are insensible to all that are added; and we still think that this whole which we call the nation, is one and the same, and that the individuals who come and go, exist only in it and for it, and are but as the grains of a heap or the leaves of a tree.

Or again, survey some populous town: crowds are pouring through the streets; some on foot, some in carriages; while the shops are full, and the houses too, could we see into them. Every part of it is full of life. Hence we gain a general idea of splendour, magnificence, opulence, and energy. But what is the truth? why, that every being in that great concourse is his own centre and all things about him are but shades, but a "vain shadow," in which he "walketh and disquieteth himself in vain." He has his own hopes and fears, desires, judgments, and aims; he is everything to himself, and no one else is really any thing. No one outside of him can really touch him, can touch his soul, his immortality; he must live with himself for ever. He has a

depth within him unfathomable, an infinite abyss of existence; and the scene in which he bears part for the moment is but like a gleam of sunshine upon its surface.

Again: when we read history, we meet with accounts of great slaughters and massacres, great pestilences, famines, conflagrations, and so on; and here again we are accustomed in an especial way to regard collections of people as if individual units. We cannot understand that a multitude is a collection of immortal souls.

I say immortal souls: each of those multitudes, not only *had* while he was upon earth, but *has* a soul, which did in its own time but return to God who gave it, and not perish, and which now lives unto Him. All those millions upon millions of human beings who ever trod the earth and saw the sun successively, are at this very moment in existence all together. This, I think, you will grant we do not duly realize. All those Canaanites, whom the children of Israel slew, every one of them is somewhere in the universe, now at this moment, where God has assigned him a place. We read, "They utterly destroyed all that was in" Jericho, "young and old." Again, as to Ai; "So it was that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand." Again, "Joshua took Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein."[1] Every one of those souls still lives. They had their separate thoughts and feelings when on earth, they have them now. They had their likings and pursuits; they gained what they thought good and enjoyed

[1] Jos. vi. viii. x.

it; and they still somewhere or other live, and what they then did in the flesh surely has its influence upon their present destiny. They live, reserved for a day which is to come, when all nations shall stand before God.

But why should I speak of the devoted nations of Canaan, when Scripture speaks of a wider, more comprehensive judgment, and in one place appears to hint at the present state of awful waiting in which they are who were involved in it? What an overwhelming judgment was the Flood! all human beings on the earth but eight were cut off by it. That old world of souls still lives, though its material tabernacle was drowned. Scripture, I say, signifies this; obscurely indeed, yet still, as it appears, certainly. St. Peter speaks of "the spirits in prison," that is, *then* in prison, who had been "disobedient," "when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah."[2] Those many, many souls, who were violently expelled from their bodies by the waters of the deluge, were alive two thousand years afterwards, when St. Peter wrote. Surely they are alive still.

And so of all the other multitudes we any where read of.—All the Jews who perished in the siege of Jerusalem, still live; Sennacherib's army still lives; Sennacherib himself still lives; all the persecutors of the Church that ever were, are still alive. The kings of Babylon are still alive; they are still, as they are described by the Prophet, weak indeed now, and in "hell beneath," but having an account to give, and waiting

[2] 1 Pet. iii. 20.

for the day of summons. All who have ever gained a name in the world, all the mighty men of war that ever were, all the great statesmen, all the crafty counsellors, all the scheming aspirants, all the reckless adventurers, all the covetous traders, all the proud voluptuaries, are still in being, though helpless and unprofitable. Balaam, Saul, Joab, Ahithophel, good and bad, wise and ignorant, rich and poor, each has his separate place, each dwells by himself in that sphere of light or darkness, which he has provided for himself here. What a view this sheds upon history! We are accustomed to read it as a tale or a fiction, and we forget that it concerns immortal beings, who cannot be swept away, who are what they were, however this earth may change.

And so again all the names we see written on monuments in churches or churchyards, all the writers whose names and works we see in libraries, all the workmen who raised the great buildings, far and near, which are the wonder of the world, they are all in God's remembrance, they all live.

It is the same with those whom we ourselves have seen, who now are departed. I do not now speak of those whom we have known and loved. These we cannot forget; we cannot rid our memory of them: but I speak of all whom we have *ever* seen; it is also true that they live. Where we know not, but live they do. We may recollect when children, perhaps, once seeing a certain person; and it is almost like a dream to us now, that we did. It seems like an accident which goes and is all over, like some creature of the moment, which has no existence beyond it. The rain falls, and the wind blows;

and showers and storms have no existence beyond the time when we felt them; they are nothing in themselves. But if we have but once seen any child of Adam, we have seen an immortal soul. It has not passed away as a breeze or sunshine, but it lives; it lives at this moment in one of those many places, whether of bliss or misery, in which all souls are reserved until the end.

Or again, let us call to mind those whom we knew a little better, though not intimately:—all who died suddenly or before their time, all whom we have seen in high health and spirits, all whom we have seen in circumstances which in any way brought out their characters, and gave them some place in our memories. They are gone from our sight, but they all live still, each with his own thoughts; they are waiting for the judgment.

I think we shall see that these thoughts concerning others are not familiar to us; yet no one can say they are not just. And I think too that the thoughts concerning others, which *are* familiar to us, are not those which become believers in the Gospel; whereas these which I have been tracing, do become us, as tending to make us think less of this world, with its hopes and fears, its plans, successes, and enjoyments.

Moreover, every one of all the souls which have ever been on earth is, as I have already implied, in one of two spiritual states, so distinct from one another, that the one is the subject of God's favour, and the other under His wrath; the one on the way to eternal happiness, the other to eternal misery. This is true of the dead, and

is true of the living also. All are tending one way or the other; there is no middle or neutral state for any one; though as far as the sight of the external world goes, all men seem to be in a middle state common to one and all. Yet, much as men look the same, and impossible as it is for us to say where each man stands in God's sight, there are two, and but two classes of men, and these have characters and destinies as far apart in their tendencies as light and darkness: this is the case even of those who are in the body, and it is much more true of those who have passed into the unseen state.

No thought of course is more overpowering than that every one who lives or has lived is destined for endless bliss or torment. It is far too vast for us to realize. But what especially increases the mind's confusion when it attempts to do so, is just this very thing which I have been mentioning, that there are but these two states, that every individual among us is either in one or the other,—that the states in which we individually are placed are so unspeakably contrary to each other, while we look so like each other. It is certainly quite beyond our understandings, that all we should now be living together as relatives, friends, associates, neighbours; that we should be familiar or intimate with each other, that there should be among us a general intercourse, circulation of thought, interchange of good offices, the action of mind upon mind, and will upon will, and conduct upon conduct, and yet after all that there should be a bottomless gulf between us, running among us invisibly, and cutting us off into two parties;—not indeed a gulf impassable here, God be praised!—not impassable till

we pass into the next world, still really existing, so that every person we meet is in God's unerring eye either on the one side or the other, and, did He please to take him hence at once, would find himself either in paradise or in the place of torment. Our Lord observes this concerning the Day of Judgment, "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

What makes this thought still more solemn, is that we have reason to suppose that souls on the wrong side of the line are far more numerous than those on the right. It is wrong to speculate; but it is safe to be alarmed. This much we know, that Christ says expressly, "Many are called, few are chosen;" "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat;" whereas "narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be who find it."

If then it is difficult, as I have said it is, to realize that all who ever lived still live, it is as difficult at least to believe that they are in a state either of eternal rest or eternal woe; that all whom we have known and who are gone, are, and that we who still live, were we now to die, should then at once be, either in the one state or the other. Nay, I will say more: when we think seriously on the subject, it is almost impossible to comprehend, I do not say that a great number, but that any person whom we see before us, however unsatisfactory appearances may be, is really under God's displeasure, and in a state of reprobation. So hard is it to live by faith! People feel it to be a difficulty to have to admit certain

other doctrines of the Church, which are more or less contrary to sight. For instance, they say as an argument against regeneration in Baptism, "Is it possible that all who have been baptized can have been born again, considering what lives they lead?" They make the evidence of sight tell against a doctrine which demands their faith. Yet, after all, is there any thing more startling, more difficult to believe, than that any one person, whom we see, however sinful his life, is at present under God's eternal wrath, and would incur it if he were to die at once, and will incur it unless he repents? This is what we cannot bring ourselves to believe. All we commonly allow is, that certain persons are what we call "in *danger* of hell." Now, if by using this cautious phrase we mean merely to express, that irreligious men may repent before death, or that men may seem to be irreligious to us, who are not so, and therefore that it is safer to speak of men being in danger of God's wrath than actually under it; so far is well. But we are in error if we mean, as is often the case, to deny thereby that irreligious men, as such, whether man can ascertain them or not, are at this very time, not only in danger, but actually under the power of God's wrath. Healthy men in a sickly country may be said to be in danger of sickness; soldiers in a battle are in danger of wounds; but irreligious men not only hazard, but do lie under God's eternal curse; and when we see an irreligious man, we see one who is under it, only we speak guardedly, both as hoping that he may repent, and as feeling that we may be mistaken. But whether or not men may be what they seem, or whether or not they are

to change, certain it is that every one who dies, passes at once into one or other of two states; and if he dies unsanctified and unreconciled to God, into a state of eternal misery.

How little the world at large realizes this, is shewn by the conduct of surviving friends after a loss. Let a person who is taken away have been ever so notorious a sinner, ever so confirmed a drunkard, ever so neglectful of Christian ordinances, and though they have no reason for supposing any thing hopeful was going on in his mind, yet they will generally be found to believe that he has gone to heaven; they will confidently talk of his being at peace, of his pains being at an end, of his happy release, and the like. They enlarge on these subjects; whereas their duty lies in keeping silence, waiting in trembling hope, and being resigned. Now, why is it they speak and think in this manner? Apparently because they cannot conceive it possible that he or that they should be lost. Even the worst men have qualities which endear them to those who come near them. They have human affections in some shape or other. Even the witch of Endor showed a sympathy and kindness towards her guest, which move us. Human feelings cannot exist in hell, and we cannot bring ourselves to think that they are subjects of hell who have them. And for this reason men cannot admit the bare possibility of another being lost; they reject the idea, and therefore, when a man dies, they conclude, as the only alternative, that he must be in Abraham's bosom; and they boldly say so, and they catch at some half sentence which he said during his illness, when he was calmer or

weaker, or at the ease with which he died, in confirmation of their belief.

And if it is difficult to believe that there are any persons among us at this moment in a state of spiritual death, how shall we understand, what perchance is the case, that there are many such, perhaps multitudes? how shall we persuade ourselves of the great truth that, in spite of outward appearances, human society, as we find it, is but a part of an invisible world, and is really divided into but two companies, the sons of God, and the children of the wicked one; that some souls are ministered unto by Angels, others led captive by devils; that some are "fellow-citizens of the saints," and of the invisible "household of God," and others companions of those His enemies in time past, who now are waiting in prison for the judgment.

How blessed would it be, if we really understood this! What a change it would produce in our thoughts, unless we were utterly reprobate, to understand what and where we are,—accountable beings on their trial, with God for their friend and the devil for their enemy, and advanced a certain way on their road either to heaven or to hell. No truths indeed, ever so awful, ever so fully brought home to the mind, will change it, if the love of God and of holiness be not there; but none among us, as we may humbly trust, is in this reprobate state. One wishes to think that no one has so done despite to the Spirit of grace, and so sinned against the Blood of the Covenant, as to have nothing of his regenerate nature left to him; no one among us, but, if he shut his eyes to the external world, and opened them

to the world within him, contemplated his real state and prospects, and called to mind his past life, would be brought to repentance and amendment. Endeavour then, my brethren, to realize that you have souls, and pray God to enable you to do so. Endeavour to disengage your thoughts and opinions from the things that are seen; look at things as God looks at them, and judge of them as He judges. Pass a very few years, and you will actually experience what as yet you are called on to believe. There will be no need of the effort of mind to which I invite you, when you have passed into the unseen state. There will be no need of shutting your eyes to this world, when this world has vanished from you, and you have nothing before you but the throne of God, and the slow but continual movements about it in preparation of the judgment. In that interval, when you are in that vast receptacle of disembodied souls, what will be your thoughts about the world which you have left! how poor will then seem to you its highest aims, how faint its keenest pleasures, compared with the eternal aims, the infinite pleasures, of which you will at length feel your souls to be capable! O, my brethren, let this thought be upon you day by day, especially when you are tempted to sin. Avoid sin as a serpent; it looks and promises well; it bites afterwards. It is dreadful in memory, dreadful even on earth; but in that awful period, when the fever of life is over, and you are waiting in silence for the judgment, with nothing to distract your thoughts, who can say how dreadful may be the memory of sins done in the body? Then the very apprehension of their

punishment, when Christ shall suddenly visit, will doubtless outweigh a thousand-fold the gratification, such as it was, which you felt in committing them; and if so, what will be the proportion between it and that punishment, if after all it be actually inflicted? Let us lay to heart our Saviour's own most merciful words, "Be not afraid," He says, "of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you, whom ye shall fear. Fear Him, which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say unto you, Fear Him."

SERMON VII.

Chastisement amid Mercy.

"*Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.*" —MICAH vii. 8, 9.

IT very commonly happens that men, who in youth or early life live in a thoughtless way, without restraint over themselves, not indeed scoffing or objecting against religion, but running into sin more or less according to the accident of external temptations, as time goes on and they get older, or when they get settled in life, or from other causes, become more serious than they were, and turn out what is called respectable and excellent men. Nay, persons who have gone farther than this, who have led really bad lives,—been drunkards and profligates, or even unbelievers, are tamed down in the course of years, and become decent or well conducted, or even religious; nay, not only in appearance religious, but perhaps they become really good men, bent on doing their duty, and making up for what they have done wrong, so that one cannot help feeling love and respect for them. And what is the conduct of the world in such cases? It is very generous, or rather

indulgent. It passes over every thing that has happened, and regards and treats them just as if they had never gone wrong. And what again is the conduct towards them of a great number of religious men? They conclude in the case of those who display a fair appearance of seriousness in their present behaviour, that God has absolutely and utterly forgiven all that has passed, as if it had never been committed; and, with that sort of liberality, in so many ways now common, so untrue, yet so easy to those who exercise it, they give away freely what is not theirs to give, and speak and act as if it lay with them to pronounce God's "absolution and remission" of the sins of others. And what effect has such treatment on those who are the subjects of it? Of course, to make them forget that they have been sinners, and to consider themselves on a level with those who have never been sinners. So that they never look back at their past lives with fear; but, rather, when they speak of the past, there is in their tone sometimes even something of tenderness and affection for their former selves;—or at best they speak of themselves in a sort of moralizing way, as they might of sinners they read of, as if it was not now *their* concern what they then were, or as if the contrast between what they were and are did but set off to advantage their present spiritual state. And thus, without going to those somewhat extreme cases, where a man almost makes his former sins a mode of entering *into* God's favour, a sort of necessary preparation for being spiritually-minded, and so far a sort of boast and glory, there are a very great many cases, I fear, where persons, religious and well-

meaning, according to the ordinary standard, are little or not at all impressed with the notion that their past sins, whether from their moral consequences, or as remembered by God, are a present disadvantage to them.

This, I conceive, in one shape or other, to be a very common state of mind. For instance, I can fancy persons, especially young persons, coming into temptation, and from one cause or other, through God's mercy, escaping from it. Either the temptation went before they could make up their minds to the sin, or their minds were diverted in other ways. And I can fancy them afterwards, it is a shocking thing to say, vexed with themselves that they did not commit the sin to which they were tempted; as if it now would be over,—as if they would not in such a case be worse now than they actually are, and they would have enjoyed the "pleasures of sin for a season," but, as it is, had lost an opportunity. Now a person who so feels, clearly does not understand that sin *leaves* a burden upon the soul, which has to be got rid of. He thinks it is done and over,—the question of guilt, pollution, punishment not occurring to him. Nothing surely is more common among persons of the most various characters of mind than thus to think that God forgets sin as soon as we forget it.

Again: take another instance, applicable especially at this time. Whole bodies of men rush into sin, and while they sin, even do not allow that they sin, because each shelters himself behind the other, and thinks that what is no one person's sin is no sin at all. This of

itself is a strange view of the case, yet it is very common. Men call themselves the *nation* when they sin in a body, and think that the nation, being a name, has nothing to answer for, and may do what it will; that its acts are only the "course of events," and necessary, as the motion of the earth. They do very rash acts, without the fear of God before their eyes, making large and bold changes (whether allowably or not, is not here the question; their plain fault being that they do not *ask* themselves whether or not it *is* allowable,—the question does not enter their minds); I say they make large changes,—they endanger God's holy religion,—they encourage scoffers and deceivers. Then, perhaps, they see they have gone too far, and they change their course; perhaps try to reverse what they have done. Now the thought never crosses them that any one has any thing to repent of; or, if they are determined to put the blame on the nation, that the nation has any thing to repent of. Accordingly, persons who hail the return of any portion of the nation to a sounder state of mind, never hint or seem to feel that a national sin has been committed, that Almighty God has books in which are set down the events of every year and day, books which will be opened at the Day of Judgment, and men judged out of them.

Further: perhaps particular *persons* have been forward in the evil course, in direct opposition to the cause of truth and holiness; and *they* change their mind and adopt another line of (what is called) politics. They are right in so doing; but no one ever seems to doubt that the change wipes out the fault, no one ever has

the real kindness to hint to them that they have committed a sin: to show any recollection of the past is thought to arise, as it often does, from personal feeling, and to be impolitic and unwise. Such persons are hailed as a succour, not thoughtfully and religiously regarded as penitents.

Many other instances might be given from which it is clear that men commonly think a sin to be cancelled when it is done and over, or, in other words, that *amendment is an expiation.* If I were to give this tone of mind a name, I should call it a practical Socinianism.

Now it will be answered that the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ are sufficient to wash out all sin, and that they really do wash it out. Doubtless; but the question to be decided is, whether He has promised to apply His all-sufficient merits at once on persons doing nothing more than changing their mode of living. Surely if any truth of the Bible is clear, it is that He gives to those who ask, not to those who do not ask. Yet the fact is, as I would maintain, that men in general do not take the trouble to ask, or, in other words, to repent; but they think the change, or apparent change or improvement itself stands instead of repentance, as a sort of means, a sacramental means, imparting forgiveness by itself, by its own virtue, as a work done;—or they think that the state of grace in which they are is such as to absorb (as it were) and consume all sin as fast as it springs up in the heart;—or they think that faith has this power of obliterating and annihilating sin, so that in fact there is nothing on their conscience

to repent of. They consider faith as superseding repentance. Such seem to be their thoughts, as far as they have any on the subject.

But, again: it may be objected that we are told that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." But I reply as before, that the persons I am speaking of do not repent, unless the mere fact of amendment be repentance. We may, if we please, maintain that there is no such thing as repentance distinct from amendment that the feeling, whatever it is, which prompts amendment, is repentance, or includes repentance; that the word repentance is, practically speaking, but a figure of speech, and means reformation. But let us speak plainly, if such is our meaning, and then we shall have to prove it from Scripture. For surely Scripture cannot be said thus to hide or dissipate repentance in other acts or courses of conduct. It surely describes it as a duty, distinct from other duties,—as a condition distinct, though of course inseparable, from other conditions, such as faith and amendment may be. We have instances of acts of faith in Scripture, and instances of acts of repentance; and it would be as reasonable to say there is no such Christian grace as faith, because it is ever joined with and lives in other graces, as to say that repentance is not a real, substantive, and independent exercise of mind, because it presupposes faith, and terminates in amendment. When St. Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," this was an act of faith; when he "went out and wept bitterly," this was an act of repentance;—when the Prodigal Son said, "I will arise and go to my father," this was an act

of faith; when he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," this was an act of repentance. When "the Publican did not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," this was an act of repentance. When the woman who had been a sinner washed our Saviour's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, this was an act of repentance in one who loved much. When Zacchæus gave half his goods to the poor, and restored fourfold what he had wrongfully obtained, this was an act of repentance in one who would fain undo the past. They are acts of a mind, lingering and engaged in the past, as hope is engaged in contemplating the future. It is common enough at present to speak lightly of the past, as if it *was* past and could not be helped, as if we could not reverse the past. We cannot literally reverse it; yet surely instances such as the foregoing are the acts of persons who would if they could; who, as it were, are trying to do so, and in a manner doing so from the intense feeling of their hearts. Regret, vexation, sorrow, such feelings seem to this busy, practical, unspiritual generation as idle; as something despicable and unmanly,—just as tears may be. And many men think it religious to say that such feelings argue a want of faith in Christ's merits. They *are* unbelieving, they *are* irrational, if they are nothing more than remorse, bitterness, gloom, and despondency. Such is "the sorrow of the world" which "worketh death." Yet there is a "godly sorrow" also; a positive sorrowing for sin, and a deprecation of its consequences and that quite distinct from faith or amendment; and

this, so far from being a barren sorrow, "worketh," as the Apostle assures us, "repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." "Behold this selfsame thing," continues the Apostle to the Corinthians, "that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."[1] Faith, then, neither is repentance, nor stands instead of it.

Here, however, we are met with another objection. It is said if a man be changed in heart and life, this is a plain proof that he has been revisited by God's grace; and if so, he is in God's favour, *or* in other words, his past sins are already forgiven him. I answer by denying what is here assumed; I would say, then, that a man may be in God's favour, yet his sins not absolutely forgiven; that faith brings him, that is, his person, into God's favour, yet a long repentance may be the only remedy for his past deeds; that faith brings him into God's favour at once, that he may receive grace to repent continually.

It may seem a contradiction, first to say that God loves a man, and next that some remnant of His displeasure is in store for him; but we are so profoundly ignorant of Him, whose thoughts and ways are not as ours, that if we have proof of the fact in His inspired word, it is our wisdom to believe that it is a fact, and leave difficulties to Him who in His good time will explain them. For instance; few persons, comparatively

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

speaking, would maintain that a man once in a state of grace cannot fall away; now here in like manner, it might be asked how can God at present love one whom He has appointed to everlasting punishment? As, then, souls may be at present in God's favour, whom He foresees to be His impenitent enemies, and companions of devils for ever, so others also much more may be in His favour, against whom an unsettled reckoning lies, the issue of which is future, who have certain sins as yet unforgiven, and certain consequences of sins as yet unprovided for. The young man whom our Lord bade give up all and follow Him, went away sorrowful and unforgiven; yet Christ is said to have "loved him." Again, how is it that God is loving over all His works, yet is angry with the wicked? His love then does not necessarily exclude His anger, nor His favour His severity, nor His grace His justice. How He reconciles these together we know not: thus much we know, that those who forsake their sins, and come to Him for grace, are in His favour, and obtain what they need for the day; but that they are forgiven at once for all the past, we do not know.

The following instances from Scripture seem to prove the contrary:—When David, for example, said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord," this act of repentance was allowed to avail for much. "Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; *thou shalt not die.*" The extreme debt of sin was remitted; yet the Prophet goes on to say, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is

born unto thee shall surely die."[2] David then had the prospect of a punishment for his sin after it was remitted, and what did he do in consequence? he sought to deprecate God; he exercised in acts of repentance, that life of faith and prayer which had been renewed in him, if so be to deprecate God's wrath. As then he was not allowed to take his restoration as a proof that God would not punish, neither have we any ground to conclude, merely because God vouchsafes to work in us what is good, that therefore what is past will never rise up in judgment against us. It may, or it may not: we trust, nay may cheerfully confide, that if we go on confessing, repenting, deprecating, and making amends, it will not: but there is no reason to suppose it will not unless we do.

Again: Moses was excluded from the promised land for speaking unadvisedly with his lips. Was he therefore "blotted out of God's book?" Was he not in a justified state, though under punishment? and does not that great Saint show us how to meet the prospect of God's judgments, when he earnestly supplicates God to pardon him what seemed so small a sin, and to let him go over Jordan? And can we have a more striking instance of this double condition in which we stand, after sinning and returning, than when so great a Saint as Moses, who was faithful in all the house of God, who saw God's face, and was the mediator for His people, yet beseeches Him, "O Lord God, ... I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon;" and the

[2] 2 Sam. xii. 13, 14.

Almighty remains still unappeased, and "will not hear" him, and says, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter?"[3] Yet Moses, though he did not gain all he would by his earnest prayer, gained something. His punishment was lightened. He was allowed to ascend Pisgah, and see the land.

Again: when the prophet from Judah had disobediently turned back to the old prophet's house, and had death denounced against him, and was met by the lion, was he at that moment in God's favour or not? Must we suppose, because he died under a judgment, that he died impenitent and unreconciled, and had his portion with Jeroboam and the worshippers of calves?

However, it may be objected to these instances, that they come from the Old Testament, that they took place before Christ came, and that little indeed is said in the New Testament about the chance of such judgments, and the necessity of such deprecation on the part of Christians. In answer, I allow that there is very little in the New Testament concerning the punishment of Christians; but then there is as little said about their sins; so that if Scripture negatives everything which it is silent about, it would be as easy to show that the Gospel does not belong at all to those who have lapsed into sin, as that punishments are not their portion, and penitential acts not their duty. As the sins of Christians are beyond the ordinary contemplation of Scripture, so are their remedies.

It will take some time to show this of the New Testament, yet it is worth attempting it from its importance

[3] Deut. iii. 24–26. *Vid.* also Exod. xxxii. 34.

I say, then, that many as are the passages in the New Testament, which describe a state of salvation, none of them, excepting one or two, mention pardon as among the *continual* privileges of that state, or otherwise than as a gift once given on entering into it. The notion of sins in Christians, other than sins of infirmity, is, for whatever reason, scarcely contemplated in Scripture. And the few texts that speak of pardon, such as "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father," do not deny that *means* are necessary to interest ourselves in that pardon; whereas there are many texts on the other hand which do allude to acts of penitence and satisfaction as necessary in order to the pardon. For instance, St. Paul, as above cited, speaks of such acts in the case of the Corinthians; and St. James as decisively of "*mercy*," *i.e.* almsgiving and the like, "rejoicing against judgment." Now to show this at length.

Now, first, I need hardly call to mind the passages in which sins are expressly declared to be forgiven when persons *first* enter into the kingdom of God. For instance, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins,"[4] says Ananias to St. Paul before his baptism. So St. Peter to the multitude, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the *remission of sins*." But what was to follow? "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."[5] This, then, was to be their state *henceforth*, not a state of sinning, but of the Spirit of holiness; their divine birth and life were such as to need no forgiveness, in the sense in which they had needed it before. Hence in the verses which

[4] Acts xxii. 16. [5] Acts ii. 38.

follow we read, "they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. All that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need; and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people"[6] Or again, take St. Paul's description, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience." And so he proceeds enumerating the fruits of the Holy Ghost in the heart, but not a word about fresh sins and fresh forgiveness in that state; as if while we remain in the Holy Ghost, this could not be. Again, in the third chapter of the same Epistle, he speaks of "the remission of sins that *are past*," not a word of sins which are to come. In another Epistle, he says that Christ is the Mediator "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the *first* Testament;" he does not say "under the *second*." St. Peter, in like manner, after going through the parts of a Christian character, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and the like, adds, "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and is forgetful of the *cleansing from his former sins*."[7] Thus

[6] Acts ii. 42–47. [7] 2 Pet. i. 9.

he reminds such a one of that former cleansing, and is silent about any second cleansing for his lack of holiness. Again, St. John addresses three classes of Christians,—beginners, the manly, and the mature; he reminds the beginners of the forgiveness of their sins, for this was the peculiar privilege of those who were just entering the kingdom—"I write unto you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His Name's sake;"[8] but this is not said to the other two; no, the young men in the faith are those who "are *strong*, and the word of God abideth in them, and they *have overcome* the wicked one;" and the elders are they who "have known Him that is from the beginning." Thus is Christian life marked out,—first forgiveness, then warfare, then contemplation; whereas the chief notion, that many men now have of a saving state, is but of a warfare which is disgraced with defeat, and of a contemplation disjoined from holiness.

Far different is the Apostles' way of viewing the Christian state. We are taken *from* sin, not forgiven in it merely. For instance; this is St. Peter's account of our election in Christ—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, *that* we *being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness;* by whose stripes ye *were* healed. For ye *were* as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."[9] And St. Paul, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, *and purify unto Himself a peculiar people*, zealous of good works."[1] You see that the Apostles' one broad idea of a state of sal-

[8] 1 John ii. 12. [9] 1 Pet. ii. 24, 25. [1] Tit. ii. 14.

vation is one, not of sinning and being forgiven, but of holiness; though now men often consider that the *highest* excellence of a Christian is to cry out, "O wretched man that I am!" Again, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your *conscience from* dead works *to serve* the living God?"[2] Again, in another Epistle he speaks of forgiveness emphatically as *the* forgiveness, *the* redemption, as if there were but one great forgiveness;—"In whom we have *the* redemption through His blood, *the* forgiveness of sins;"[3] and he says just before that, "He hath chosen us that *we should* be *holy* and without blame before Him in love." And in another chapter, "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it in the *washing of water* by the word;"[4] *then* is the forgiveness, and why? The Apostle proceeds, "*That* He might present it unto Himself a *glorious* Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be *holy* and without blemish."

In like manner, the prayers and good wishes which the Apostles send their brethren do not contain any prayers for forgiveness. This is remarkable; they pray God to bless them, and make them more and more holy, and the like, but not to pardon their sins. Not as if Christians do not sin; I began by assuming that, alas, they do; I only say that the New Testament mainly contemplates them in a higher state, and gives little information how to treat them as we actually find them; and therefore obliges us to have recourse to the Old Testa-

[2] Heb. ix. 14. [3] Eph. i. 7. [4] Eph. v. 26.

ment. For instance, St. Paul prays for the Ephesians, that they may have "the spirit of *wisdom* and *revelation*," have the "eyes of their understanding *enlightened*," discern "the riches of the glory of God's inheritance," and "the exceeding greatness of His power;" may be "strengthened with *might* by His Spirit in the inner man," and be "rooted and grounded in *love*."[5] He prays for the Thessalonians that their "whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved *blameless* unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ;"[6] that "God which hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, may comfort their hearts, and *stablish* them in every good word and work;"[7] that "the Lord may make them increase and abound in love one toward another to the end that He may establish their hearts *unblameable* in holiness before God;"[8] what a strong word "unblameable" is, and "unblameable *before God!*" This was what He aimed at for them, not that they should be forgiven, but that they should not sin. Again, for the Hebrews, that God would "make them *perfect* in every good work to do His will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ."[9] In like manner, St. Peter prays for his brethren, that God may "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them;"[1] and St. Jude exhorts them "building up themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, to *keep themselves* in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,"

[5] Eph. i. 17–19; iii. 16, 17. [6] 1 Thess. v. 23.
[7] 2 Thess ii. 16, 17. [8] 1 Thess. iii. 13. [9] Heb. xiii. 21.
[1] 1 Pet. v. 10.

and gives glory to Him "who is *able* to *keep* them from falling" (he does not say to pardon, as if *that* was the end of the Gospel), "and to present them before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Now, considering the number of passages I have quoted, surely it is very remarkable, even before we know what is to be found in other places, even supposing a forgiveness of sins, after the one great forgiveness and like it, is mentioned somewhere else, it is very remarkable (I say) that it should not be mentioned in all these. Can we doubt that under the Gospel sins were not to be *expected*, to say the least; and, as far as these passages go, were not *provided* for in it?

But let us turn our thoughts to some more extended passages of Scripture. Consider, for instance, St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, detached passages of which have already been cited. The whole of it is addressed to Christians; and though there is abundant mention of their blessedness as being such, in various ways, yet the idea of continual forgiveness does not suggest itself as one of their privileges;—just as the forgiveness of sins is not mentioned as a privilege to be enjoyed by Saints in heaven, or by the Angels, for they do not need it, in like manner, Christians are called from sin unto holiness, and at least ought not to need it. Thus in the fourth and fifth chapters there is a description of the Church in the way of precept which exactly answers to its actual state, as described in history, in the second chapter of the Acts. Christians were to be followers of God as dear children, to walk in love as Christ had loved them, to walk circumspectly, to redeem the time, to be filled

with the Spirit, and to be instant in praises and thanksgivings. Grievous crimes *are* mentioned also, and we are warned against them; but how? does St. Paul for an instant suppose that a Christian, remaining a Christian, can be guilty of them? Does he say, if a Christian is unclean, or covetous, or the like, that of course he must repent indeed and amend, but still that he is safe if he has faith? Far from it; he speaks as if such sins were impossible in Christians; he does not enter into the case of a Christian who has been guilty of them. "For this *ye know*, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, ... *hath any inheritance* in the kingdom of Christ and God." Therefore the Apostle warns his brethren not to be "*partakers* with the children of disobedience, for they *were* darkness, but *are* light in the Lord," in that Spirit, whose fruit is "goodness, righteousness, and truth," and in that light which detects all that is evil; for the words have been spoken over them, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Now consider, again, the sixth and eighth chapters of the Romans, which are more remarkable because they are in contrast with other parts of the Epistle. In the seventh chapter, St. Paul speaks of a state in which there was no forgiveness also; but of what state? one of spiritual death and despair; our state by *nature*. In it the absence of pardon is the cause of eternal woe, but in the Christian state it is the consequence of the gift of grace. The Apostle declares that there is no condemnation to those who are in the Spirit; why? because "the righteousness of the law *is* fulfilled in them;" how? by

"the law of the Spirit of life," or (as he says in the Epistle last quoted) because the fruit of the Spirit is "goodness, righteousness, and truth." Again, in the sixth chapter, which also describes the Christian state, there is not a hint of forgiveness being a special privilege of a state of grace; but rather Christians, "being made free from sin," are said to become "the servants of *righteousness*." All this is very different from what the Apostle said in the third chapter, when speaking of our state by nature, and justification out of it. There *forgiveness of sins* is dwelt on. It is remarkable that it should *then* be dwelt on and that it should not afterwards.

Once more, consider the first chapter of St. James's Epistle. There *temptation* is spoken of, as it is by St. Paul in a passage already quoted. St. Paul speaks of it, not as causing us to fall, but as a means of our becoming holier. "We *glory* in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh *not ashamed*,"[2] or as the Psalmist says, "They had an eye unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed;"[3] —there is no shame in the Church. Such is St. Paul's view of trial to the Christian; such is St. James's also; "My brethren," he says, "count it all *joy* when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience; and let patience have her perfect work."[4] Then he bids them ask of God wisdom, speaks of good gifts and perfect gifts coming from the Father of Lights, and of pure religion and

[2] Rom. v. 3-5. [3] Ps. xxxiv. 5. [4] James i. 2-4.

undefiled; but not a word of sins to be forgiven: on the contrary, he declares that wilful sin, such as temptations may occasion, is the beginning of a course which "when finished bringeth forth death;" whereas the real Christian *overcomes* temptation, or, as St. John says, "overcomes the world," not falls under it. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the *crown of life*, which the Lord hath promised to them that *love* Him;" words which singularly correspond to St. Paul's at the end of his trial, "*I have* fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a *crown* of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that *love* His appearing."[5] Moreover, there is this additional remark to be made about St. James's Epistle, that, whereas there are one or two passages in which he addresses, not Christians, but Jews, there he does speak at once of conversion, submission, purification, and approach to God. Now it is not strange he should speak of these things to the unregenerate; but it is strange he should not also speak of them to Christians, if he contemplated the case of Christians reducing themselves to a state that like of the unregenerate. Since, then, he, as well as the other Apostles, does not treat of an unhappy condition, which now occurs so frequently, it is not wonderful that he and they do not give its symptoms, dangers, or remedies, or enlarge, whether upon those judgments or those penitential observances, which in the case of sinners as yet unregenerate, the Gospel and the Old Testament describe.

[5] 2 Tim. iv. 7. 8.

However, I observe lastly, there *are* instances of declension both of faith and conduct in the Corinthians and Galatians. St. Paul writes to both. He arraigns and remonstrates with them. Does he give them one hint that if they believe in Christ's atoning power, those particular sins of theirs will be at once remitted?

To sum up then, and apply what I have said:—When Christians have gone wrong in any way, whether in belief or in practice, scandalously or secretly, it seems that pardon is not explicitly and definitely promised them in Scripture as a matter of course; and the mere fact that they afterwards become better men, and are restored to God's favour, does not decide the question whether they are in every sense pardoned; for David was restored and yet was afterwards punished. It is still a question whether a debt is not standing against them for their past sins, and is not now operating or to operate to their disadvantage. What its payment consists in, and how it will be exacted, is quite another question, and a hidden one. It may be such, if they die under it, as to diminish their blessedness in heaven; or it may be a sort of obstacle here to their rising to certain high points of Christian character; or it may be a hindrance to their ever attaining one or other particular Christian grace in perfection,—faith, purity, or humility; or it may prevent religion taking deep root within them and imbuing their minds; or it may make them more liable to fall away; or it may hold them back from that point of attainment which is the fulfilment of their trial; or it may forfeit for them the full assurance of hope; or it may lessen their peace and comfort in the intermediate

state, or even delay their knowledge there of their own salvation; or it may involve the necessity of certain temporal punishments, grievous bodily disease, or sharp pain, or worldly affliction, or an unhappy death. Such things are "secrets of the Lord our God,"—not to be pried into, but to be acted upon. We are all more or less sinners against His grace, many of us grievous sinners; and St. Paul and the other Apostles give us very scanty information what the consequences of such sin are. God may spare us, He may punish. In either case, however, our duty is to surrender ourselves into His hands, that He may do what He will. "It is the Lord," said pious Eli, when judgment came on him, "let Him do what seemeth Him good." Only let us beg of Him not to forsake us in our miserable state; to take us up where we are, and make us obey Him under the circumstances into which sin has brought us. Only let us beg of Him to work all repentance and all righteousness in us, for we can do nothing of ourselves, and to enable us to hate sin truly, and confess it honestly, and deprecate His wrath continually, and to undo its effects diligently, and to bear His judgments cheerfully and manfully. Let us beg of Him the spirit of faith and hope, that we may not repine or despond, or account Him a hard master; that we may learn lovingly to adore the hand that afflicts us, and, as it is said, to kiss the rod, however sharply or long it smites us; that we may look on to the end of all things, which will not tarry, and to the coming of Christ which will at length save us, and not faint on the rough way, nor toss upon our couch of thorns; in a word, that we may make the words

of the text our own, which express all that sinners, repentant and suffering, should feel, whether towards God or towards their tempter. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him; until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness."

SERMON VIII.

Peace and Joy amid Chastisement.

"*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.*"—Job xiii. 15.

THIS is a sentiment which often occurs in Scripture, whether expressed in words or implied in the conduct of good men. It is founded on the belief that God is our sole strength, our sole refuge; that if good is in any way in store for us, it lies with God; if it is attainable, it is attained by coming to God. Though we be in evil case even after coming to Him, we are sure to be in still worse, if we keep away. If He will but allow sinners such as we are to approach Him, for that is the only question, then it is our wisdom to approach Him at once in such a way as He appoints or appears to approve. At all events, there is no one else we can go to; so that if He refuses to receive us, we are undone. And on the other hand, if He does receive us, then we must be ready to submit to His will, whatever it is towards us, pleasant or painful. Whether He punishes us or not, or how far pardons, or how far restores, or what gifts He bestows, rests with Him; and it is our part to take good or bad, as He gives it.

This is the general feeling which St. Peter seems to express in one way, when he cries out, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It is the feeling under different circumstances and in a different tone, of the Prodigal Son, when He said, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." It shows itself under the form of peace and joy in the words of David: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me;" and it speaks in the text by the mouth of the heavily afflicted and sorely perplexed Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Inquirers seeking the truth, prodigals repentant, saints rejoicing in the light, saints walking in darkness, all of them have one word on their lips, one creed in their hearts,—to "trust in the Lord for ever, for with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

There is another case different from all of these, in which it is equally our duty and wisdom thus to stay ourselves upon God; that of our being actually under punishment for our sins. Job maintained his innocence, which his friends denied, as thinking his afflictions were a judgment upon some secret wickedness now coming to light. He, on the other hand, being conscious of his integrity and sincerity in time past, could but wait in the darkness till God revealed why He chastised as a sinner, one who had been "perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil.[1]" But men may often be

[1] Job i. 1.

conscious that they have incurred God's displeasure, and conscious that they are suffering it; and then their duty is still to trust in God, to acquiesce or rather to concur in His chastisements, as if they were a self-inflicted penance, and not the strokes of His rod. For God is our merciful Father, and when He afflicts His sons, yet it is not willingly; and though in one sense it is in judgment, yet in another and higher, it is in mercy. He provides that what is in itself an evil should become a good; and, while He does not supersede the original law of His just government, that suffering should follow sin, He overrules it to be a healing medicine as well as a punishment. Thus, "in wrath" He "remembers mercy." Thus St. Paul decides, quoting the words of Solomon, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."[2] You see he calls it a "chastisement" and a "rebuke," but still it is in "love;" and it is our duty to take it as such, and to bless and praise Him under it.

And Scripture affords us some remarkable instances of persons glorifying, or called on to glorify God, when under His hand, some of which it may be well here to mention.

One which deserves especial notice is Joshua's exhortation to Achan, who was about to be put to death for secreting a portion of the spoils of Jericho, and was thus dying apparently under the very rod, and (if any man ever), without encouragement to trust in God, or hope of

[2] Heb. xii. 5, 6.

profit in serving Him. "My son," Joshua says to him, "give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him." Thus he began; yet observe, his next words were as severe as if no duty, no consolation, were left to the offender, — despair only. He continues thus sternly, "Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day." "And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire," him "and his sons and his daughters," "after they had stoned them with stones."[3]

Another remarkable instance is given us in the history of Jonah; I mean, in his address to Almighty God out of the fish's belly. It illustrates most appositely the case of a true, though erring servant of God, chastised, yet blessing God under the chastisement, and submitting himself even without any clear prospect how he was to escape from it.—"I cried," he says, "by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and Thou heardest my voice. For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy Holy Temple. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine Holy Temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."[4]

[3] Josh. vii. 19, 24, 25. [4] Jonah ii. 2-4, 7-9.

Now, one should think, nothing could be more simple to understand than the state of mind described, however hard it be to realize; I mean the combined feeling that God loves us yet punishes us, that we are in His favour, yet are under, or may be brought under His rod; the feeling of mingled hope and fear, of suspense, of not seeing our way, yet having a general conviction that God will bring us on it, if we trust to Him. And this the more so, because very few indeed, or rather none at all, but must be conscious, if they get themselves to think, that they have grievously offended God at various times, in spite of all He has done for them; and that, for what they know, Christ's merits may not be so imputed to them as to exempt them from some punishment, which will demand in them the feelings I have been describing. Yet so it is, at least in this day, men find a difficulty in conceiving how Christians can have hope without certainty, sorrow and pain without gloom, suspense with calmness and confidence; how they can believe that in one sense they are in the light of God's countenance, and that in another sense they have forfeited it. I proceed then to describe a state of mind which it seems to me no one ought to misunderstand; it is so much a matter of common sense.

We will say, a man *is* a serious Christian, for of such I am speaking. He is in the habit of prayer; and he tries to serve God, and he has, through God's mercy, the reward of such a religious course of life. He has a consciousness that God has not given him up; he has a good hope of heaven. I am not speaking of the strength of it, but more or less a good hope. He does not indeed

often realize the circumstances of the future, he does not dwell upon what is to become of him; but I mean he does not look forward anxiously, feeling, as he does, around him the proofs, in which he cannot be deceived, of God's present love towards him. His being allowed to attend God's ordinances, his being enabled in a measure to do his duty, his perception of Gospel truth, his being able to accept, admire, and love high and holy views of things, all conspire to prove that at present, without going on to speculate or to calculate how he shall fare at Christ's judgment seat, at present he is in a certain true sense in God's favour. The feeling may vary from a mere trembling guess, a mere dawning and doubtful hope, to a calm though subdued confidence; still, something of this kind is the state of mind of all serious men. They are not in a state of immediate alarm, for the day of judgment is future; and for the present they are conscious somehow they are in God's hands as yet, and are thereby supported.

But now suppose a man (and this is the case of most Christians), who is conscious of some deliberate sin or sins in time past, some course of sin, or in later life has detected himself in some secret and subtle sin. Supposing it breaks on a man that he has been an over-indulging father, and his children have suffered from it; or that he has been harsh, and so has alienated those who ought to have confided in him; or that he has been over-fond of worldly goods, and now is suddenly overtaken with some grievous fall in consequence; or that he has on any particular occasions allowed sin in others, when he might have warned them, and they are dead

and gone, and the time of retrieving matters is past; or that he has taken some false step in life, formed connexions irreligiously or the like:—what will be his state when the conviction of his sin, whatever it is, breaks upon him? Will he think himself utterly out of God's favour? I think not; he has the consciousness of his present prevailing habits of obedience, in spite of his not being so careful as he ought to be; he knows he has served God on the whole; he knows he has really desired to do God's will, though he has not striven as he ought to have done, or has been negligent in some particulars in ascertaining what that will was. Much as he may be shocked at and condemn and hate himself, much as he will humble himself, yet I do not suppose he will ordinarily *despair*. But on the other hand, will he take up a notion that God has forgiven him? I think not either; I will not believe he has so little humility, and so much presumption. I am not speaking of ordinary men, who have no fixed principle, who take up and lay down religion as it may happen, but of *serious* men; and I will not lightly impute it to any such man that he takes up the notion of his having been absolutely forgiven for the sins of his past life. Who is to forgive him? how is he to know it? No; I see no certainty for him; he will be convinced indeed that God has not cast him out of His sight, whatever his sins have been; for he will argue, "If I were utterly reprobate, I could have no holy wish at all, or could even attempt any good work." His outward privileges, his general frame and habit of mind, assure him of so much as this; but as surely his memory

tells him that he has had sins upon his conscience; he has no warrant that they are not there still; and what has come, what is to come of them, what future consequences they imply, is unknown to him. Thus he is under two feelings at once, not at all inconsistent with each other,—one of present enjoyment, another of undefined apprehension; and on looking on to the Day of Judgment, hope and fear both rise within him.

Further, let us suppose such an one actually brought into trouble, and that evidently resulting from the sin in question. For instance: supposing he has been passionate and violent, or unjust, and suppose some serious annoyance in consequence befals him from the injured party; or supposing he has neglected some obvious duty, and now the consequences of that neglect come upon him; or supposing he has in former years been imprudent in money transactions, and is under the embarrassments which they have occasioned. Now here he certainly experiences, with a clearness which he cannot explain away, a double aspect of God's providence towards him; for he sees His love and fatherly affection plainly enough, in the opportunity he still has of attending God's ordinances, and in the inward evidences of that faith, obedience, and peace, which can come from God only; on the other hand, he sees His displeasure as plainly in the visitation which comes upon him from without. I know it is sometimes said, that such trials are to the true Christian not judgments but corrections; rather they are judgments *and* corrections; surely they are merciful corrections, but they are judgments too. It is impossible but a man must consider

(for example) undutiful children a punishment on him for having once neglected them, or penury a judgment on him for past extravagance, whatever may be his present attainments in obedience, greater or less; whatever his hope that God is still gracious to him in spite of past sin; whatever be his duty and his ability to turn it into a blessing. It is against common sense to say otherwise. In spite, then, of the doctrine now popular, that "as to past sin, it is over, God has forgiven it," really I do not think any truly serious lowly Christian of himself will think so, will of himself say so, though many are betrayed into such a way of speaking from want of seriousness, and many because others indulge in it. God has not absolutely forgiven the sin past; here is a proof He has not,—He is punishing it. It will be said, He has forgiven it as to its eternal consequences. Where is the proof of this? all we see is, that He is punishing it. If we argue from what we see, He has not forgiven it at all. Here a man will say, "How can He be gracious to me in other ways, unless He has been gracious so as to forgive? Is not forgiveness the first step in grace?" It *was* when we were baptized; whether it is so since must be decided from Scripture. Certainly, if we go by what our reason tells us (and I insist on what reason would say, not as if I thought Scripture spoke differently, but because persons often seem to have a great difficulty in understanding what is meant by saying that God should both be gracious to us, yet not have absolutely forgiven us), I say nothing is more compatible with reason, judging from our experience of life, than that we should have God's present favour and help without full

pardon for the past. Supposing, for instance, a child has disobeyed us, and in disobeying has met with an accident. Do we at once call him to account? and not rather wait a while, till he is in a fit state to be spoken to, and when we can better decide whether or no what has befallen him be a sufficient punishment? We pass the fault over for the present, and act towards him as if we had no cause to be displeased. This is one instance out of a thousand which occur in daily life of our treating kindly, nay loving persons, with whom we are dissatisfied, and mean one day to expostulate. Surely, then, the two ideas are quite separate, of putting aside what is past and of showing kindness at present. Of course, the instance referred to is not an exact parallel to our own state in God's sight; no exact parallel can be found. We do not even know what is meant by saying that God, who sees the end from the beginning, pardons at one time rather than at another. We can but take divine truth as it is given us. We know there is one time at least when He pardons persons, whom He foresees will afterwards fall away and perish; I mean, the time of Baptism. He desires the salvation of those who ultimately come short of it. It does not follow, then, because He is still gracious to us, enables us to serve Him, and makes us love Him, that therefore we have no arrears of obedience, no debt of punishment, to be brought into account against us, when He visits. And so far from its being strange that we are in this double state in His sight, and ought to have these mingled feelings towards Him, rather it is too reasonable for us not to assent to it unless Scripture says the contrary.

But, it may be said, Scripture does say the contrary; it declares that all who repent shall be forgiven. Doubtless; but what is repentance? is repentance the work of a day? is it a mere word? is it enough to say, "I am sorry?" Consider the different frames of mind we are in hour by hour; how much we feel at one time which we do not at another. What degree or kind of feeling is enough? Considering how our hearts deceive us, is even the most passionate feeling to be trusted? Did not the Son in the Parable say, "I go sir," and went not. Do you suppose that he meant to go, or did not mean when he so promised? did he not think he was in earnest when he was not? If indeed we feel distress at having sinned, let us give God the praise; it shows that He is pleading with our hearts, it shows that He wishes us to repent, that He is bringing us to repentance: but it does not show that we have duly repented, and that He actually has forgiven us.

But it may be said, that Scripture says that faith will apply to us the merits of Christ, and thus become the instrument of washing away sins. I do not know where Scripture so says; but even if it did, I suppose it would not speak of every kind of faith, but of living faith. But how is living faith ascertained? by works;—now, who will maintain that his works can be such as to bring home to him an undoubting assurance, that he has a faith able to do this great thing?

But again, a person may say, "I have a conviction I have this faith; I feel I have; I feel I can appropriate the merits of Christ." Or again, "I have an assurance that I am forgiven." True: but where does Scripture

tell us that such an assurance, without grounds for it beyond our feeling it, comes from God? where is it promised? till it is found there, we must be content not to be sure, and to fear and hope about ourselves at once.

But it may be said again, that we are told, "Ask, and ye shall receive;" if then we ask for pardon, we are pardoned. It is true; but where is it said that we shall gain it by once asking? on the contrary, are we not expressly told that we must come again and again, that we must "wait on the Lord," that we must "continue in prayer," that we must "pray and not faint," that we must be importunate in our supplications, though God seems as though He hears us not? It is quite true that if we persevere in prayer for pardon through our lives, that in spite of God's not sensibly answering, we shall at length obtain it; but this is the very state of mingled hope and fear, of peace and anxiety, of grace and of insecurity, which I have been describing. Surely, no words can express better such a waiting and persevering temper, than the words of the text, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Once more, it may be said, and this is a far better answer than any that I have hitherto noticed, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper imparts to us forgiveness, and assures us of it. The benefits imparted to our souls by this Holy Sacrament are indeed most high and manifold; but that the absolute forgiveness of our past sins is not one of them, is plain in our Church's judgment from the Confession in the Service, indeed from all our Confessions. We there say, that "the remembrance of our sins is grievous, and the burden intolerable;"—now does our

"remembrance" only carry us back to those sins which we have committed since we last came to this blessed ordinance, and not rather those into which we have fallen from our earliest years? and if so, is not this to confess that we are not sure of their pardon? else why are they a "burden?" Again: "for Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive us all that is past;" our past sins then are not forgiven when we thus pray: does not that "past" extend back through our whole life up to infancy? If so, up to the day of our death, up to the last awful celebration of this Blessed Sacrament in our sick chamber, we confess that our sins all through our life are unforgiven, whatever be the effect, which we know cannot be little, of the grace of that Ordinance and the Absolution therein pronounced over us.

To these considerations I will add one other. We are to be *judged* at the Last Day, and "receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad."[5] Our sins will then be had in remembrance; therefore they are not forgiven here.

It seems clear, then, that the sins which we commit here, are not put away here,—are not put away absolutely and once for all, but are in one sense upon us till the Judgment. There is indeed one putting away of sins expressly described in Scripture, which we all received from God's mercy, when though "born in sin and the children of wrath," we were "made the children of grace." This was in Baptism, which accordingly is called in the Creed, the "One Baptism for the remission of sins." And of this great absolution Scripture speaks in many

[5] 2 Cor. v. 10.

ways, calling on those who have not received it to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away their sins;" declaring there is "a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness;" and promising that "though their sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."[6] This all we have received long since; and none knows but God and His Angels,—nay, I will say, none knows but God Himself and His Only Son, and His Spirit who then is present, —how much Holy Baptism does secretly for our souls, what hidden wounds it heals, and what inbred corruption it allays; but this is past long since. We have sinned in spite of grace then given; many of us grievously; and the question now is, where do we stand, and *how* are we to gain a second pardon?

I answer, we stand in God's presence, we are in His Church, in His favour, in the way of His grace, in the way to be pardoned; and this is our great comfort on the very first view of the matter. We are not in a desperate state, we are not cast out of our Father's house; we have still privileges, aids, powers, from Him; our persons are still acceptable to Him. And this being the case, through God's great mercy, it is quite clear what our duty is, even if Scripture gave us no insight into it. Even if Scripture said nothing of the duty of importunate prayer and patient waiting, in order to obtain that which we need so much, yet our natural sense must suggest it to us. See what our condition is;—at present most happily circumstanced, in the bosom of God's choicest

[6] Acts xxii. 16. Zech. xiii. 1. Isaiah i. 18.

gifts; but with evil behind us, and that through our frailty ever increasing, and a judgment before us. Why, it is plainly our duty to make the most of our time of grace; to be earnest and constant in deprecating God's wrath; to do all we can to please Him; to bring Him of our best, not as if it had any intrinsic merit, but because it is our best; to endeavour so to cherish and bring to fruit the gifts of His grace within us, that "when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations;" and, since He at present condescends to work in us "to will and to do," to aim, as St. Paul directs, at "working out our own salvation with fear and trembling," working while it is day, "before the night cometh," for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Though we be at present punished for our sins, though we be under judgment, or, if it be in prospect, though we be uncertain more or less how things will be with us, though the adversary of our souls accuse us before God, though his threatening voice sound in our ears year after year, though we feel the load of our sins and cannot throw them from our memory, nay, though it should be God's will that even to the Day of Judgment, no assurance should be given us, still, wherever we are, and whatever we are, like Jonah "in the belly of hell," with Job among the ashes, with Jeremiah in the dungeon, or like the Holy Children in the flames, let us glorify our Lord God, and trust in Him, and praise Him, and magnify Him for ever. Let us take in good part whatever sorrow He inflicts in His providence, or however long. Let us "glorify the Lord in the fires;"[7] they may circle us, but

[7] Isaiah xxiv. 15.

they cannot really touch us; they may threaten, but they are as yet restrained. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." We will sing and praise His Name. When two or three are gathered together, an interior temple, a holy shrine is formed for them, which nothing without can destroy. We will not cease to rejoice in what God has given, because He has not as yet promised us every thing. Nor will we on the other hand forget our past sins, because He allows us peace and joy in spite of them. We will remember them that He may not remember them; we will repent of them again and again, that He may forgive them; we will rejoice in the punishment of them if He punishes, thinking it better to be punished in this life than in the next; and if not yet punished, we will be prepared for the chance of it. He will give us grace according to our day, according to His gracious promise: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."[8]

[8] Isaiah xliii. 1, 2.

SERMON IX.

The State of Grace.

"*Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*"—ROM. v. 1, 2.

THERE are many men, nay the greater part of a Christian country, who have neither hope nor fear about futurity or the unseen world; they do not think of it at all, or bring the idea of it home to them in any shape. They do not really understand, or try to understand, that they are in God's presence, and must one day be judged for what they are now doing, any more than they see what is going on in another quarter of the world, or concern themselves about what is to happen to them ten years hence. The next world is far more distant from them than any future period of this life or any other country; and consequently, they have neither hope nor fear about it, for they have no thought about it of any kind.

There are others who feel no fear whatever, though they profess to feel much joy and transport. I cannot sympathize with such, nor do I think St. Paul would,

for he bids us "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" nor St. Peter, who bids us "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear."[1]

But there are others who seem only to fear, or to have very little joy in religion. These are in a more hopeful state than those who only joy and do not fear at all; yet they are not altogether in a right state. However, they are in an interesting state. I purpose to describe it now, and to make some remarks upon it.

It is certainly the duty, as it is the privilege, of every Christian to have his heart so fixed on Christ as to desire His coming; yet alas! it too often happens that when we say, "Thy kingdom come," our sins rise up before our minds, and make our words falter. Now the persons I speak of are in so sad and uncomfortable a state of mind, as to be distressed whenever they think of the next world. They may be well-living, serious persons, and have ever been such from their youth; yet they have an indefinite sense of guilt on their minds, a consciousness of their own miserable failings and continual transgressions, such as annoys and distresses them, as a wound or sore might, when they think of Christ's coming in judgment. A sense of guilt, indeed, every one, the best of us, must have. I am not blaming *that*, but I speak of *such* a sense as hinders those who feel it from rejoicing in the Lord. They have one thought alone before their minds, the great irregularity of their lives; they come to Church, and try to attend, but their thoughts wander; the day passes, and it seems to them unprofitable. They have done God no service. Or

[1] Phil. ii. 12. 1 Pet. i. 17.

again, they have some natural failing which breaks out from time to time, and grievously afflicts them on recollection. Perhaps they are passionate, and are ever saying what they are sorry for afterwards; or they are ill-tempered, and from time to time put every thing about them into confusion, and make every one unhappy by their gloomy looks and sullen words; or they are slothful, and with difficulty moved to do any thing, and they are ever lamenting wasted hours, and opportunities lost. The consequence is, that their religion is a course of sorrowful attempting and failing, self-reproach, and dryness of spirits. They are deeply sensible how good God is, and how wonderful His providence; they really feel very grateful, and they really put their trust where it should be put. But their faith only leads them to see that judgment is a fearful thing, and their sense of God's mercies to say, "How little grateful am I." They hear of the blessings promised to God's true servants after death, and they say, "Oh, how unprepared am I to receive them."

Now no one will fancy, I should trust, that I am saying any thing in disparagement of such feelings; they are very right and true. I only say they should not be the whole of a man's religion. He ought to have other and more cheerful feelings too. No one on earth is free from imperfection and sin, no one but has much continually to repent of; yet St. Paul bids us "rejoice in the Lord alway;" and in the text, he describes Christians as having peace with God and rejoicing in hope of His glory. Sins of infirmity, then, such as arise from the infection of our original nature, and not from

deliberation and wilfulness, have no divine warrant to keep us from joy and peace in believing

Now, then, the question is, *how* the persons in question come to have this defective kind of religion.

1. In the first place, of course, we must take into account bodily disorder, which is not unfrequently the cause of the perplexity of mind I have been describing. Many persons have an anxious self-tormenting disposition, or depression of spirits, or deadness of the affections, in consequence of continued or peculiar ill-health; and though it is their study, as it is their duty, to strive against this evil as much as they can, yet it often may be impossible to be rid of it. Of course, in such cases we can impute no fault to them. It is God's will; He has willed in His inscrutable purpose that they should not be able to rejoice in the Gospel, doubtless for their ultimate good, to try and prove them; as any thing else may be a trial, as ill-health itself is such. They should not repine. It is an undeserved mercy that they have the Gospel brought near to them at all, that they have the prospect of heaven, be it faint or distinct; and they must be patient under their fears, and try to serve God more strictly.

2. But, again, the uncomfortable state of mind I have described, sometimes, it is to be feared, arises, I will not say from wilful sin, but from some habitual deficiency which might be corrected, but is not. It is very difficult of course to draw the line between sins which are (as it were) the direct consequences of our old nature, and those which are more strictly and entirely our own, yet there is a class which rises above the former, though

it would be harsh to call them wilful. The sins I speak of arise partly through frailty, partly through want of love; and they seem just to have this effect, of dimming or quenching our peace and joy. Such, for instance, are recurring and stated acts of sin, such as might be foreseen and provided against. Anger, on the contrary, may overtake a man when he least expects it. Indolence may show itself in a difficulty or inability to fix his mind on the subject which ought to occupy it, so that time goes and nothing is done. Ill-temper may fall upon him like a spell, and bind his faculties, so that his very attempts to break it may make him seem more gloomy, untoward, and disagreeable, from the appearance of an effort and struggle. Such need not be more than sins of infirmity. But there are sins which happen at certain times or places, and which a man ought to prepare for and overcome. I do not say that he must overcome them this time or that, but he must be in a state of warfare against them, and must be tending to overcome them. Such, for instance, is indolence in rising from his bed. Such, again, is a careless, irregular, or hurried way of saying private prayer. Such is any habitual excess in eating or drinking. Such is running into temptation, — going again and again to places, or among people, who will induce him to do what he should not, to idle, or to jest, or to talk much. Such is extravagance in spending money. All these laxities of conduct impress upon our conscience a vague sense of irregularity and guilt. The absence of a vigilant walk, of exact conscientiousness in all things, of an earnest and vigorous warfare against our spiritual

enemies, in a word, of strictness, this is what obscures our peace and joy. Strictness is the condition of rejoicing. The Christian is a soldier; he may have many falls; these need not hinder his joy in the Gospel; he must be humbled indeed, but not downcast; it does not prove he is not fighting; he has enemies within and without him; he has the remains of a fallen nature. But wilful sin in any shape proves that he is not an honest soldier of Christ. If it is habitual and deliberate, of course it destroys his hope; but if it be less than deliberate, and yet of the nature of wilful sin, it is sufficient, though not (we trust) to separate him at once from Christ, yet to separate him from the inward vision of Him. The same result will follow, perhaps irremediably, where men have been in past life open or habitual sinners, though they may now have repented. Penitents cannot hope to be as cheerful and joyful in faith as those who have never fallen away from God; perhaps it is not desirable they should be, and is a bad sign if they are. I do not mean to say that in the course of years, and after severe humiliation, it is not possible for a repentant sinner to feel a well-grounded peace and comfort, but he must not expect it. He must expect to be haunted with the ghosts of past sins, rising from the charnel-house, courting him to sin again, yet filling him the while with remorse; he must expect "a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind,"[2] misgivings about his safety, misgivings about the truth of religion, and about particular doctrines, painful doubts and difficulties, so that he is forced to

[2] Deut. xxviii. 65.

grope in darkness or in cold and dreary twilight. I do not say there are not ways of escaping all this misery at a moment, but they are false ways; but if he continues in the true and narrow way, he will find it rough and painful; and this is his fit correction.

3. Again, where there is no room for supposing the existence of wilful sins, past or present, this fearful anxious state of mind arises very commonly from another cause in one shape or other—from not having a lively sense of our present privileges; and this is the subject to which I shall call your attention. Many indeed, finding that Scripture says great things about the joy which true Christians have in the Gospel, think it consists in their having personally and individually an assurance of their absolute predestination to eternal life; or at least of their being now in a state of salvation, such that, were they at once to die, they would be sure of heaven. Such a knowledge of course would inspire great joy if they had it; and they fancy that the joy of the Christian does arise from it. But since they have it not, and only think they have it, it is obvious what extravagances will follow from the notion instead of real benefit; what perversion of the Gospel, what rashness, presumption, self-exaltation, and intemperate conduct. Such persons of course claim the more consolatory parts of Scripture, such as the text, for themselves. They forcibly take them from more sober Christians, as if they were their own, and others had no right to them, nay, as if others had no right to explain them, to comment on them, or to have an opinion about them; as if they alone could understand them, or feel them.

or appreciate them, or use them. What is the consequence? better men are robbed of their portion; their comfortable texts are gone, they acquiesce in the notion (too readily) that these texts are *not* theirs; not that they exactly allow that they belong to the enthusiastic persons who claim them, but they think they belong to no one at all, that they belonged indeed to St. Paul, and to inspired or highly-gifted men, but to no one now.

And this conclusion is strengthened by the circumstance, that men of duller and less sensitive minds are willing to give them up. There are persons highly respectable indeed, and serious, but whose religion is of a dry and cold character, with little heart or insight into the next world. They have strong sense and regular habits; their passions are not violent, their feelings not quick, and they have no imagination or restless reason to run away with their thoughts or to perplex them. They do not grieve much or joy much. They do joy and grieve, but it is in a way, in a certain line, and not the highest. They are most excellent men in their line, but they do not walk in a lofty path. There is nothing unearthly about them; they cannot be said to be worldly, yet they do not walk by things unseen; they do not discern and contemplate the next world. They are not on the alert to detect, patient in watching, keen-sighted in tracing the movements of God's secret Providence. They do not feel they are in an immense unbounded system, with a height above and a depth beneath. They think every thing is plain and easy, they have no difficulties in religion, they see nc recondite and believe in no hidden meanings in Scrip-

ture, and discern no hints there sympathetic with guesses within them. Such men are used to explain away such passages as the text; to be "at peace with God," to "have access into the grace in which we stand," to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God,"—to them have little or no meaning. Their joy does not rise higher than what they call a "rational faith and hope, a satisfaction in religion, a cheerfulness, a well-ordered mind, and the like,"—all very good words, if properly used, but shallow to express the fulness of the Gospel privileges.

What with the enthusiastic, then, on the one hand, who pervert the texts in question, and with the barren-minded on the other, who explain them away, Christians are commonly left without the texts at all, and so have nothing to contemplate but their own failings; and these surely are numerous enough, and fit to make them dejected.

Observe, then, what religion becomes to them,—a system of duties with little of privilege or comfort. Not that any one would have cause to complain (God forbid!) though it had no privilege; for what can sinners claim to whom it is a great gain to be respited from hell? Not that religion can really be without privilege; for the very leave to serve God is a privilege, the very thought of God is a privilege, the very knowledge that Christ has so loved the world as to die for it is an inestimable privilege. Religion is full of privileges, involved in the very notion of it, and drawn out on the right hand and on the left, as a man walks along the path of duty. He cannot stir this way or that, but he

awakens some blessed and consoling thought which cheers and strengthens him insensibly, even if it does not so present itself to him, that he can contemplate and feed upon it. However, in the religious system I speak of, the privilege of obedience *is* concealed, and the bare duty prominently put forward; the privileges are made vague and general rather than personal; and thus a man is almost reduced to the state of natural religion, in which God's Law is known without His Gospel. Under such circumstances, religion becomes little more than a code of morals, the word and will of an absent God, who will one day come to judge and recompense, not the voice of a present and bountiful Saviour.

And this may in one sense be called a bondage,—a bondage, yet without thereby disparaging the excellence and perfection of God's law. Men at this day so boldly talk of the bondage of the law, that if you heard them, you would think that the being under that law was in itself a misery or an inferior state, as if obedience to God's commandments were something low and second best. But is it really so? then are the Angels in a very low state. The highest blessedness of any creature is to be under the law, the highest glory is obedience. It is our shame, not our privilege, that we do not obey as the Angels do. Men speak as if the Gospel were glorious, because it destroyed the law of obedience. No; it destroyed the Jewish law, but not the holy law of God therein contained and manifested. And if that Holy Word, which "endureth for ever in heaven," which is co-eternal with God, is a bondage to us, as it is by nature, so much the more shame for us. It is our great

sinfulness, not any inherent defect in the law, which makes it a bondage; and the message of the Gospel is glorious, not because it releases us from the law, but because it enables us to fulfil it,—fulfil it (I do not say wholly and perfectly), but with a continual approximation to perfect obedience, with an obedience running on into perfection, and which in the next world will rise into and result in perfection. This is St. Paul's account of it, "Being not without law to God," he says, "but under the law to Christ."[3] Again, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law," that is, that kind of obedience to the law to which he *by himself* attained, "but that which is through the faith of Christ,"[4] that high and spiritual obedience which faith in Christ, aided by the grace of Christ, enabled him to accomplish. And in another place, "The commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful The law is spiritual, but *I* am carnal, sold under sin." And again, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."[5]

[3] 1 Cor. ix. 21. [4] Phil. iii. 9.
[5] Rom. viii. 3, 4.

When then I say that religion, considered as a law or code of morals, is a bondage, let no one suppose me to countenance that presumptuous and unchristian spirit, which seems to exult in being through Christ free (as it thinks) from the law, instead of being bound and able through Christ to obey it more perfectly. The glory of the Gospel is, not that it *destroys* the law, but that it makes it *cease* to *be* a bondage; not that it gives us freedom *from* it, but *in* it; and the notion of the Gospel which I have been describing as cold and narrow is, not that of supposing Christianity a law, but of supposing it to be scarcely more than a law, and thus leaving us where it found us. He who thinks it but a law, will of course be fearful and miserable. The commandment of God will seem true, but to him, a helpless sinner, hard and uninviting; and though it is still his duty to try to obey, and he will do so, if he be Christ's in heart, yet he will do so sadly and sorrowfully, his memory continually embittered, and his conscience laden with fresh and fresh sins. Two thoughts alone will be before him, God's perfections and his own sinfulness; and he will feel love and gratitude indeed to his Almighty Lord and Saviour, but not joy. He will look upon the message of the Gospel as a series of *conditions*. He will consider the Gospel as a *covenant*, in which he must do his part, and God will assuredly do His. Now, salvation, doubtless, *is* conditional, and the Gospel *is* a covenant. These words are as good and as true as the word "law;" but then salvation is not *merely* conditional, nor the Gospel *merely* a covenant; and those who think so, unless they have peculiarly happy minds, will obey in

a certain dry, dull, heavy way, without spring, animation, life, vigour, and nobleness. And if possessed of sensitive, gentle, affectionate minds, they will be very likely to sink into despondency and fear. And they are the prey or the mockery of every proud, self-confident boaster, who passes by on the other side, boldly proclaiming himself to be elect and safe and possessed of a joyful assurance, and that every one else, who does not make as venturesome a profession as he, is carnal and a slave of Satan, or at least in a state far, far below himself.

What then is it, that these little ones of Christ lack, who, without wilful sin, past or present, on their consciences, are in gloom and sorrow? What is the doctrine that will quicken them, and make their devotion healthy? What will brace them and nerve them, and make them lift up their heads, and will pour light and joy upon their countenance till it shines like the face of Moses when he came down from the Mount? What but the great and high doctrines connected with the Church? They are not merely taken into covenant with God; they are taken into His Church. They have not merely the promise of grace; they have its presence. They have not merely the conditional prospect of a reward; for a blessing, nay, unspeakable, fathomless, illimitable, infinite, eternal blessings are poured into their very hearts, even as a first step and an earnest from God our Saviour, of what He will do for those who love Him. They "are passed from death unto life," and are the children of God and heirs of heaven. Let us steadily contemplate this comfortable view, and we shall gain

strength, and feel cheerful and joyful in spite of our sins. O fearful follower of Christ, how is it thou hast never thought of what thou art and what is in thee? Art thou not Christ's purchased possession? Has He not rescued thee from the devil, and put a new nature within thee? Did He not in Baptism cast out the evil spirit and enter into thee Himself, and dwell in thee as if thou hadst been an Archangel, or one of the Seraphim who worship before Him continually? Much and rightly as thou thinkest of thy sins, hast thou no thought, I do not say of gratitude, but of wonder, of admiration, of amazement, of awful and overpowering transport, at what thou art through grace? When Jacob woke in the morning, his first thought was not about his sins or his danger, though he rightly felt both, but about God;—he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."[6] Contemplate then thyself, not in thyself, but as thou art in the Eternal God. Fall down in astonishment at the glories which are around thee and in thee, poured to and fro in such a wonderful way that thou art (as it were) dissolved into the kingdom of God, as though thou hadst nought to do but to contemplate and feed upon that great vision. This surely is the state of mind the Apostle speaks of in the text when he reminds us who are justified and at peace with God, that we have the access to His royal courts, and stand in His grace, and rejoice in hope of His glory. All the trouble which the world inflicts upon us, and which flesh cannot but feel, sorrow, pain, care, bereavement, these avail not to disturb the

[6] Gen. xxviii. 17.

tranquillity and the intensity with which faith gazes upon the Divine Majesty. All the necessary exactness of our obedience, the anxiety about failing, the pain of self-denial, the watchfulness, the zeal, the self-chastisements which are required of us, as little interfere with this vision of faith, as if they were practised by another, not by ourselves. We are two or three selves at once, in the wonderful structure of our minds, and can weep while we smile, and labour while we meditate.

And if so much is given us by the first Sacrament of the Church, what, think we, is given us in the second? O, my brethren, let us raise and enlarge our notions of Christ's Presence in that mysterious Ordinance, and we shall understand how it is that the Christian, in spite of his infirmities, and not forgetting them, still may rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." For what is it that is vouchsafed to us at the Holy Table, when we commemorate the Lord's death? It is, "Jesus Christ before our eyes evidently set forth, crucified among us."[7] Not before our bodily eyes; so far, every thing remains at the end of that Heavenly Communion as it did at the beginning. What was bread remains bread, and what was wine remains wine. We need no carnal, earthly, visible miracle to convince us of the Presence of the Lord Incarnate. We have, we trust, more faith than to need to see the heavens open, or the Holy Ghost descend in bodily shape,—more faith than to attempt, in default of sight, to indulge our reason, and to confine our notion of the Sacrament to some clear assemblage of words of our own framing. We have faith and love enough, in

[7] Gal. iii. 1.

St. Paul's words, to "*discern* the Lord's Body." He who is at the right hand of God, manifests Himself in that Holy Sacrament as really and fully as if He were visibly there. We are allowed to draw near, to "give, take, and eat" His sacred Body and Blood, as truly as though like Thomas we could touch His hands and thrust our hand into His side. When He ascended into the Mount, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light."[8] Such is the glorious presence which faith sees in the Holy Communion, though every thing looks as usual to the natural man. Not gold or precious stones, pearls of great price or gold of Ophir, are to the eye of faith so radiant as those lowly elements which He, the Highest, is pleased to make the means of conveying to our hearts and bodies His own gracious self. Not the light of the sun sevenfold is so awfully bright and overpowering, if we could see as the Angels do, as that seed of eternal life, which by eating and drinking we lay up in our hearts against the day of His coming. In spite then of all recollections of the past or fear for the future, we have a present source of rejoicing; whatever comes, weal or woe, however stands our account as yet in the books against the Last Day, this we have and this we may glory in, the present power and grace of God in us and over us, and the means thereby given us of victory in the end.

Such are the thoughts which fill the heart with joy, yet without tending in consequence to relax our obedience, for a reason already mentioned, viz. that *strictness* of life, exact conscientiousness, is the tenure of our

[8] Matt. xvii. 2.

privileges. They are ours to possess, that is our glory; they are ours to lose, that is our solicitude. We can keep them, we have not to gain them,—but we shall not keep them without fear and trembling; still we *have* them, and there is nothing to hinder our rejoicing in them while we have them. For fear has reference to the future; and that we *may* lose them to-morrow (which God forbid), but supposing it, is no reason why we should not rejoice in them to-day.

SERMON X.

The Visible Church for the Sake of the Elect.

"I endure all things for the elect's sakes; that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."—2 TIM. ii. 10.

IF we were asked what was the object of Christian preaching, teaching, and instruction, what the office of the Church, considered as the dispenser of the word of God, I suppose we should not all return the same answer. Perhaps we might say that the object of Revelation was to enlighten and enlarge the mind, to make us act by reason, and to expand and strengthen our powers;—or to impart knowledge about religious truth, knowledge being power directly it is given, and enabling us forthwith to think, judge, and act for ourselves;—or to make us good members of the community, loyal subjects, orderly and useful in our station, whatever it be;—or to secure, what otherwise would be hopeless, our leading a religious life; the reason why persons go wrong, throw themselves away, follow bad courses and lose their character being, that they have had no education, and that they are ignorant. These and

other answers might be given; some beside, and some short of the mark. It may be useful then to consider with what end, with what expectation, we preach, teach, instruct, discuss, bear witness, praise, and blame; what fruit the Church is right in anticipating as the result of her ministerial labours.

St. Paul gives us a reason in the text different from any of those which I have mentioned. He laboured more than all the Apostles; and why? not to civilize the world, not to smooth the face of society, not to facilitate the movements of civil government, not to spread abroad knowledge, not to cultivate the reason, not for any great worldly object, but "for the elect's sake." He "endured all things," all pain, all sorrow, all solitariness; many a tear, many a pang, many a fear, many a disappointment, many a heartache, many a strife, many a wound; he was "five times scourged, thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice in shipwreck, in journeys often, in perils of waters, of robbers, of his own countrymen, of the heathen, of the city, of the wilderness, of the sea, of false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness;"[1] and some men could have even been content so to have suffered, had they by these voluntary acts of suffering, been buying as by a price first one and then another triumph of the Gospel. If every stripe was a sinner's ransom, and every tear restored a backslider, and every disappointment was balanced with a joy, and every privation was a brother's edification, then he might

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 24–27.

have gladly endured all things, knowing that the more he suffered the more he did. And to a certain degree this effect certainly followed; the jailor after his scourging at Philippi, was converted, and washed his stripes; and his "bonds in Christ" were "manifest" at Rome, "in all the palace, and in all other places."[2] In spite, however, of such gracious compensations vouchsafed to the Apostle from time to time, still great visible effects, adequate to the extent of his suffering, were neither its result nor its motive. He sowed in abundance that he might reap in measure; he spoke to the many that he might gain the few; he mixed with the world that he might build up the Church; he "endured all things," not for the sake of all men, but "for the elect's sake," that he might be the means of bringing them to glory. This is instanced of him and the other Apostles in the book of Acts. Thus when St. Peter first preached the Gospel, on the day of Pentecost, "they were all amazed," some "mocked," but "they that gladly received the word were baptized." And when St. Paul and St. Barnabas preached at Antioch to the Gentiles, "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."[3] When St. Paul preached at Athens, "some mocked," others said, "We will hear thee again," but "certain men clave unto him." And when he addressed the Jews at Rome, "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Such was the view, which animated, first Christ Himself, then all His Apostles, and St. Paul in particular, to preach to all, in order to succeed with some. Our Lord "saw of the travail of

[2] Phil. i. 13. [3] Acts. ii. 12, 13; xiii. 48; xvii. 32–34.

His soul, and was satisfied." St. Paul, as His servant and instrument, was satisfied in like manner to endure all things for the elect's sake; or, as he says in another place, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."[4] And such is the office of the Church in every nation where she sojourns; she attempts much, she expects and promises little.

This is a great Scripture truth, which in this busy and sanguine day needs insisting upon. There are in every age a certain number of souls in the world, known to God, unknown to us, who will obey the Truth when offered to them, whatever be the mysterious reason that they do and others do not. These we must contemplate, for these we must labour, these are God's special care, for these are all things; of these and among these we must pray to be, and our friends with us, at the Last Day. They are the true Church, ever increasing in number, ever gathering in, as time goes on; with them lies the Communion of Saints; they have power with God; they are His armies who follow the Lamb, who overcome princes of the earth, and who shall hereafter judge Angels. These are that multitude which took its beginning in St. Paul's day, for which he laboured, having his portion in it himself; for which we in our day must labour too, that, if so be, we too may have a place in it: according to the text, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto

[4] 1 Cor. ix. 22.

one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."[5]

God is neither "without witness" nor without fruit, even in a heathen country:—"In every nation," says St. Peter, "he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."[6] In every nation, among many bad, there are some good; and, as nations are before the Gospel is offered to them, such they seem to remain on the whole after the offer; "many are called, few are chosen." And to spend and be spent upon the many called for the sake of the chosen few, is the office of Christian teachers and witnesses.

That their office is such seems to be evident from the existing state of Christian countries from the first. Unless it be maintained that the Church has never done her duty towards the nations where she has sojourned, it must be granted that success in the hearts of the many is not promised her. Christianity has raised the tone of morals, has restrained the passions, and enforced external decency and good conduct in the world at large; it has advanced certain persons in virtuous or religious habits, who otherwise might have been imbued with the mere rudiments of truth and holiness; it has given a firmness and consistency to religious profession in numbers, and perhaps has extended the range of really religious practice. Still on the whole the great multitude of men have to all appearance remained, in a spiritual point of view, no better than before. The state of great cities now is not so very different from what it

[5] Matt. x. 41, 42. [6] Acts x. 35.

was of old; or at least not so different as to make it appear that the main work of Christianity has lain with the face of society, or what is called the world. Again, the highest class in the community and the lowest, are not so different from what they would be respectively without the knowledge of the Gospel, as to allow it to be said that Christianity has succeeded with the world, *as* the world, in its several ranks and classes. And so of its pursuits and professions; they are in character what they were, softened or restrained in their worst consequences, but still with the same substantial fruits. Trade is still avaricious, not in tendency only but in fact, though it has heard the Gospel; physical science is still sceptical as it was when heathen. Lawyers, soldiers, farmers, politicians, courtiers, nay, shame to say, the priesthood, still savour of the old Adam. Christian states move forward upon the same laws as before, and rise and fall as time goes on, upon the same internal principles. Human nature remains what it was, though it has been baptized; the proverbs, the satires, the pictures, of which it was the subject in heathen times, have their point still. In a word, taking religion to mean as it well may, the being bound by God's law, the acting under God's will instead of our own, how few are there in a country called Christian who even profess religion in this sense! how few there are who live by any other rule than that of their own ease, habit, inclination, as the case may be, on the one hand, and of external circumstances on the other! with how few is the will of God an habitual object of thought, or search, or love, or obedience! All this is so notorious that un-

believers taunt us with it. They see, and scoff at seeing, that Christians, whether the many or the educated or the old, nay, or the sacred ministry, are open to the motives, and unequal to the temptations, which prevail with human nature generally.

The knowledge of the Gospel then has not materially changed more than the surface of things; it has made clean the outside; but as far as we have the means of judging, it has not acted on a large scale upon the mind within, upon that "heart" out of which proceed the evil things "which defile a man." Nor did it ever promise it would do so. Our Saviour's words, spoken of the Apostles in the first instance, relate to the Church at large,—"I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine." In like manner St. Paul says that Christ came, not to convert the world, but "to purify unto Himself a *peculiar people*, zealous of good works;" not to sanctify this evil world, but to "deliver us *out of* this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father;[7] not to turn the whole earth into a heaven, but to bring down a heaven upon earth. This has been the real triumph of the Gospel, to raise those beyond themselves and beyond human nature, in whatever rank and condition of life, whose wills mysteriously co-operate with God's grace, who, while God visits them, really fear and really obey God, whatever be the unknown reason why one man obeys Him and another not. It has made men saints, and brought into existence specimens of faith and holiness, which without it are unknown and impossible.

[7] John xvii. 9. Tit. ii. 14. Gal. i. 4.

It has laboured for the elect, and it has succeeded with them. This is, as it were, its token. An ordinary kind of religion, praiseworthy and respectable in its way, may exist under many systems; but saints are creations of the Gospel and the Church. Not that such a one need in his lifetime seem to be more than other well-living men, for his graces lie deep, and are not known and understood till after his death, even if then. But then, it may be, he "shines forth as the sun in the kingdom of his Father," figuring in his memory on earth what will be fulfilled in soul and body in heaven. And hence we are not accustomed to give to living men the *title* of saints, since *we* cannot well know, while they are among us, who have lived up to their calling and who have not. But in process of time, after death, their excellence perhaps gets abroad; and then they become a witness, a specimen of what the Gospel can do, and a sample and a pledge of all those other high creations of God, His saints in full number, who die and are never known.

There are many reasons why God's saints cannot be known all at once;—first, as I have said, their good deeds are done in secret. Next, good men are often slandered, ridiculed, ill-treated in their lifetime; they are mistaken by those, whom they offend by their holiness and strictness, and perhaps they are obliged to withstand sin in their day, and this raises about them a cloud of prejudice and dislike, which in time indeed, but not till after a time, goes off. Then again their intentions and aims are misunderstood; and some of their excellent deeds or noble traits of character are

known to some men, others to others, not all to all. This is the case in their lifetime; but after their death, when envy and anger have died away, and men talk together about them, and compare what each knows, their good and holy deeds are added up; and while they evidence their fruitfulness, also clear up or vindicate their motives, and strike the mind of survivors with astonishment and fear; and the Church honours them, thanks God for them, and "glorifies God in"[8] them. This is why the saints of God are commonly honoured, not while they live, but in their death; and if I am asked to state plainly how such a one differs from an ordinary religious man, I say in this,—that he sets before him as the one object of life, to please and obey God; that he ever aims to submit his will to God's will; that he earnestly follows after holiness; and that he is habitually striving to have a closer resemblance to Christ in all things. He exercises himself, not only in social duties, but in Christian graces; he is not only kind, but meek; not only generous, but humble; not only persevering, but patient; not only upright, but forgiving; not only bountiful, but self-denying; not only contented, but meditative and devotional. An ordinary man thinks it enough to do as he is done by; he will think it fair to resent insults, to repay injuries, to show a becoming pride, to insist on his rights, to be jealous of his honour, when in the wrong to refuse to confess it, to seek to be rich, to desire to be well with the world, to fear what his neighbours will say. He seldom thinks of the Day of Judgment, seldom thinks

[8] Gal. i. 24.

of sins past, says few prayers, cares little for the Church, has no zeal for God's truth, spends his money on himself. Such is an ordinary Christian, and such is not one of God's elect. For the latter is more than just, temperate, and kind; he has a devoted love of God, high faith, holy hope, over-flowing charity, a noble self-command, a strict conscientiousness, humility never absent, gentleness in speech, simplicity, modesty, and unaffectedness, an unconsciousness of what his endowments are, and what they make him in God's sight. This is what Christianity has done in the world; such is the result of Christian teaching; viz., to elicit, foster, mature the seeds of heaven which lie hid in the earth, to multiply (if it may be said) images of Christ, which, though they be few, are worth all else that is among men, and are an ample recompense and "a crown of rejoicing" for Apostles and Evangelists "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming."[9]

It is no triumph then for unbelievers that the Gospel has not done what it never attempted. From the first it announced what was to be the condition of the many who heard and professed it. "Many are called, few are chosen." "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Though we laboured ever so much, with the hope of satisfying the objector, we could not reverse our Saviour's witness, and make the many religious and the bad few. We can but do what is to be done. With our utmost toil we do but reach those for

[9] 1 Thess. ii. 19.

whom crowns are prepared in heaven. "Whom He did foreknow, them did He predestinate." "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."[1] We cannot destroy the personal differences which separate man and man; and to lay it as a fault to baptism, teaching, and other ministrations, that they cannot pass the bounds predicted in God's word, is as little reasonable as attempting to make one mind the same as another.

And if this be the case, how mistaken is the notion of the day, that the main undertaking of a Christian Church is to make men good members of society, honest, upright, industrious, and well-conducted; and that it fails of its duty, and has cause of shame unless it succeeds in doing so; and that of two religious communities, that must be the more scriptural in its tenets, of which the members are more decent and orderly!—whereas it may easily happen that a corruption of the Gospel, which sacrifices the better fruit, may produce the more abundant, men being not unwilling to compound for neglect of a strict rule by submitting to an easy one. How common is it, at this time, to debate the question, whether the plans of education pursued for the last fifty years have diminished crime or not; whether those who are convicted of offences against the law have for the most part been at school or not! Such inquiries surely are out of place, if Christian education is in question. If the Church set out by

[1] Rom. viii. 29. Rev. xxii. 11.

engaging to make men good members of the state, they would be very much in place; but if the great object of her Sacraments, preaching, Scriptures, and instructions, is to save the elect of God, to foster into life and rear up into perfection what is really good, not in the sight of man merely, but in the sight of God; not what is useful merely, but what is true and holy; and if to influence those who act on secondary motives require a lowering of the Christian standard, and if an exhibition of the truth makes a man worse unless it makes him better, then she has fulfilled her calling if she has saved the few; and she has done more than her calling, so far as by God's grace she has, consistently with the higher object, restrained, softened, or sobered the many. Much doubtless she will do in this way, but what she does must not be by compromise or unfaithfulness. The Church and the world cannot meet without either the world rising or the Church falling; and the world forsooth pleads necessity, and says it cannot rise to the Church, and deems the Church unreasonable when she will not descend instead.

The Gospel then has come to us, not merely to make us good subjects, good citizens, good members of society, but to make us members of the New Jerusalem, and "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Certainly no one is a true Christian who is not a good subject and member of society; but neither is he a true Christian if he is nothing more than this. If he is not aiming at something beyond the power of the natural man, he is not really a Christian, or one of the elect. The Gospel offers to us things supernatural.

"Call unto Me," says Almighty God by His prophet, "and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."[2] But, alas! the multitude of men do not enter into the force of such an invitation, or feel its graciousness or desirableness. They are satisfied to remain where they find themselves by nature, to be what the world makes them, to bound their conceptions of things by sight and touch, and to conceive of the Gospel according to the thoughts, motives, and feelings which spring up spontaneously within them. They form their religion for themselves from what they are, and live and die in the ordinary and common-place round of hopes and fears, pleasures and pains. In the ordinary common-place round of *duties* indeed, they ought to be engaged, and are bound to find satisfaction. To be out of conceit with our lot in life, is no high feeling,—it is discontent or ambition; but to be out of conceit with the ordinary way of *viewing* our lot, with the ordinary thoughts and feelings of mankind, is nothing but to be a Christian. This is the difference between worldly ambition and heavenly. It is a heavenly ambition which prompts us to soar above the vulgar and ordinary *motives* and *tastes* of the world, the while we abide *in* our calling; like our Saviour who, though the Son of God and partaking of His Father's fulness, yet all His youth long was obedient to His earthly parents, and learned a humble trade. But it is a sordid, narrow, miserable ambition to attempt to *leave* our earthly lot; to be wearied or ashamed of what we are, to hanker after greatness of station, or novelty

[2] Jer. xxxiii. 3.

of life. However, the multitude of men go neither in the one way nor the other; they neither have the high ambition nor the low ambition. It is well they have not the low, certainly; it is well they do not aim at being great men, or heroes; but they have no temptation to do so. What they are tempted to, is to settle down in a satisfied way in the world as they find it, to sit down in the "mire and dirt" of their natural state, to immerse themselves and be absorbed in the unhealthy marsh which is under them. They tend to become part of the world, and be sucked in by it, and (as it were) changed into it; and so to lose all aspirations and thoughts, whether good or bad, after any thing higher than what they are. I do not know whether rich or poor are in greater temptation this way. Poor people, having daily wants, having their bread to earn, and raiment and shelter to provide, being keenly and earnestly and day by day pressed with the realities of pain and anxiety, seem cut off from all high thoughts. To call on a poor man to live a Seraph's life, to live above the world, and to be ambitious of perfection, seems at first sight, as things go, all one with bidding him be a man of refinement of mind or literary taste, a man of science, or a philosopher. Yet is it so? Were not the Apostles in great necessities? had not St. Paul to work for his livelihood? did they eat and drink at their will? did they know one day where they should get their meal or lay their head the next? Surely not; yet they were as expressly told as others, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."[3] And then it

[3] Matt. vi. 33.

is promised with an express reference to those anxieties about food and clothing, "And all these things shall be added unto you." This passage in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount shows us most undeniably, that poverty must not be allowed to make us,—is no excuse for our being,—what poor people so often are, anxious, fretful, close, deceitful, dull-minded, suspicious, envious, or ungrateful. No; much as we ought to feel for the poor, yet, if our Saviour's words be true, there is nothing to hinder the poorest man from living the life of an Angel, living in all the unearthly contemplative blessedness of a Saint in glory, except so far as sin interferes with it. I mean, it is *sin*, and not poverty which is the hindrance.

Such is the case with the poor; now again take the case of those who have a competency. They too are swallowed up in the cares or interests of life as much as the poor are. While want keeps the one from God by unsettling his mind, a competency keeps the other by the seductions of ease and plenty. The poor man says, "I cannot go to Church or to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, till I am more at ease in my mind; I am troubled, and my thoughts are not my own." The rich man does not make any excuses,—he comes; but his "heart goeth after his covetousness." It is not enlarged by being rid of care; but is as little loosened from what is seen, as little expatiates in the free and radiant light of Gospel day, as if that day had not been poured upon it. No; such a one may be far other than a mere man of the world,—he may be a religious man, in the common sense of the word; he may be exemplary

in his conduct, as far as the social duties of life go; he may be really and truly, and not in pretence, kind, benevolent, sincere, and in a manner serious: but so it is, his mind has never been unchained to soar aloft, he does not look out with longing into the infinite spaces in which, as a Christian, he has free range. Our Lord praises those who "*hunger and thirst* after righteousness." *This* is what men in general are without. They are more or less "full, and have need of nothing," in religious matters; they do not feel how great a thing it is to be a Christian, and how far they fall short of it. They are contented with themselves on the whole; they are quite conscious indeed that they do act up to their standard, but it is their standard that is low. A sort of ordinary obedience suffices them as well as the poor. A person in straitened circumstances will say, "I have enough to do to take care of my wife and children;" another says, "I have lost my husband and friends, and have enough to do to take care of myself;" bystanders say, "What a mockery to call on a starving population, to watch, fast, and pray, and aim at perfection." Well, let me turn, I say, to the rich men, and speak to them; what say the rich? *They* put aside all such hungering and thirsting after righteousness as visionary, high-flown, and what they call romantic. They have a certain definite and clear view of their duties; they think that the summit of perfection is to be decent and respectable in their calling, to enjoy moderately the pleasures of life, to eat and drink, and marry and give in marriage, and buy and sell, and plant and build, and to take care that religion does not *engross* them. Alas! and is it so?

is the superhuman life enjoined on us in the Gospel but a dream ? is there no meaning in our own case, of the texts about the strait gate and the narrow way, and Mary's good part, and the rule of perfection, and the saying which " all cannot receive save they to whom it is given ?" Holy men, certainly, do not throw themselves out of their stations. They are not gloomy, or morose, or overbearing, or restless; but still they are pursuing in their daily walk, and by their secret thoughts and actions, a conduct *above* the world. Whether rich or poor, high-born or low-born, married or single, they have never wedded themselves to the world; they have never surrendered themselves to be its captives; never looked out for station, fashion, comfort, credit, as the end of life. They have kept up the feeling which young people often have, who at first ridicule the artificial forms and usages of society, and find it difficult to conform themselves to its pomp and pretence. Of course it is not wise to ridicule and run counter to any thing that is in its nature indifferent; and as they have grown older they have learned this; but the feeling remains of want of sympathy with what surrounds them; whereas these are the very things which men of the world are most proud of, their appointments, and their dress, and their bearing, and their gentility, and their acquaintance with great men, and their connexions, and their power of managing, and their personal importance.

God grant to us a simple, reverent, affectionate, temper, that we may truly be the Church's children, and fit subjects of her instructions! This gained, the rest

through His grace will follow. This is the temper of those "little ones," whose Angels "do always behold the face" of our heavenly Father; of those for whom Apostles endured all things, to whom the Ordinances of grace minister, and whom Christ "nourisheth and cherisheth" even as His own flesh.

SERMON XI.

The Communion of Saints.

"*All Thy Works praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints give thanks unto Thee: they show the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power.*"
—PSALM cxlv. 10, 11.

IT was the great promise of the Gospel, that the Lord of all, who had hitherto manifested Himself externally to His servants, should take up His abode in their hearts. This, as you must recollect, is frequently the language of the Prophets; and it was the language of our Saviour when He came on earth: "I will love him," He says, speaking of those who love and obey Him, "and will manifest Myself to him. . . . We will come unto him, and make our abode with him."[1] Though He had come in our flesh, so as to be seen and handled, even this was not enough. Still He was external and separate; but after His ascension He descended again by and in His Spirit, and then at length the promise was fulfilled.

There must indeed be a union between all creatures and their Almighty Creator even for their very existence; for it is said, "In Him we live, and move, and

[1] John xiv. 21, 23.

have our being;" and in one of the Psalms, "When Thou lettest Thy breath go forth, they shall be made."[2] But far higher, more intimate, and more sacred is the indwelling of God in the hearts of His elect people;—so intimate, that compared with it, He may well be said not to inhabit other men at all; His presence being specified as the characteristic privilege of His own redeemed servants.

From the day of Pentecost, to the present time, it has been their privilege, according to the promise, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you *for ever*,"—for ever: not like the Son of man, who having finished His gracious work went away. Then it is added, "even the *Spirit* of Truth:" that is, He who came for ever, came as a Spirit, and, so coming, did for His own that which the visible flesh and blood of the Son of man, from its very nature, could not do, viz., He came into the souls of all who believe, and taking possession of them, He, being One, knit them all together into one. Christ, by coming in the flesh, provided an external or apparent unity, such as had been under the Law. He formed His Apostles into a visible society; but when He came again in the Person of His Spirit, He made them all in a real sense one, not in name only. For they were no longer arranged merely in the form of unity, as the limbs of the dead may be, but they were parts and organs of one unseen power; they really depended upon, and were offshoots of that which was One; their separate persons were taken into a mysterious union with things

[2] Psalm civ. 30.

unseen, were grafted upon and assimilated to the spiritual body of Christ, which is One, even by the Holy Ghost, in whom Christ has come again to us. Thus Christ came, not to make us one, but to die for us: the Spirit came to make us one in Him who had died and was alive, that is, to form the Church.

This then is the special glory of the Christian Church, that its members do not depend merely on what is visible, they are not mere stones of a building, piled one on another, and bound together from without, but they are one and all the births and manifestations of one and the same unseen spiritual principle or power, "*living* stones," internally connected, as branches from a tree, not as the parts of a heap. They are members of the Body of Christ. That divine and adorable Form, which the Apostles saw and handled, after ascending into heaven became a principle of life, a secret origin of existence to all who believe, through the gracious ministration of the Holy Ghost. This is the fruitful Vine, and the rich Olive tree upon and out of which all Saints, though wild and barren by nature, grow, that they may bring forth fruit unto God. So that in a true sense it may be said, that from the day of Pentecost to this hour there has been in the Church but One Holy One, the King of kings, and Lord of lords Himself, who is in all believers, and through whom they are what they are; their separate persons being but as separate developments, vessels, instruments, and works of Him who is invisible. Such is the difference between the Church before the Spirit of Christ came, and after. Before, God's servants were as the dry bones of the Prophet's vision,

connected by profession, not by an inward principle; but since, they are all the organs as if of one invisible, governing Soul, the hands, or the tongues, or the feet, or the eyes of one and the same directing Mind, the types, tokens, beginnings, and glimpses of the Eternal Son of God. Hence the text, in speaking of the kingdom of Christ, enlarges upon the special office of His Saints,—"All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy Saints give thanks unto Thee: they show the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power, that Thy power, Thy glory, and mightiness of Thy kingdom might be known unto men."

Such is the Christian Church, a *living* body, and *one;* not a mere framework artificially arranged to *look* like one. Its being alive is what makes it one; were it dead, it would consist of as many parts as it has members; but the Living *Spirit* of God came down upon it at Pentecost, and made it *one*, by giving it *life.*

On this great day then,[3] when we commemorate the quickening or vivifying of the Church, the birth of the spiritual and new creature out of an old world "as good as dead," it will be seasonable to consider the nature and attributes of this Church, as manifested in the elect, as invisible, one, living and spiritual; or what is otherwise called the doctrine of the Communion of Saints with each other, and in the Holy Trinity, in whom their communion with each other consists. And this I the rather do, because the Communion of Saints is an article of the Creed, and therefore is not a matter of secondary importance, of doubt or speculation.

[3] Preached on Whitsunday.

The Church then, properly considered, is that great company of the elect, which has been separated by God's free grace, and His Spirit working in due season, from this sinful world, regenerated, and vouchsafed perseverance unto life eternal. Viewed so far as it merely consists of persons *now* living in this world, it is of course a visible company; but in its nobler and truer character it is a body invisible, or nearly so, as being made up, not merely of the few who happen still to be on their trial, but of the many who sleep in the Lord. At first, indeed, in the lifetime of the Apostles, a great proportion of the whole body was in this world; that is, not taking into account those Saints, who had lived in Jewish times, and whom Christ, on His departure, made partakers of the privileges then purchased by His death for *all* believers. St. Stephen and St. James the Greater were the first distinguished Saints of the New Covenant, who were gathered in to enrich the elder company of Moses, Elias, and their brethren. But from that time they have flowed in apace; and as years passed away, greater and greater has become the proportion which the assembly of spirits made perfect bears to that body militant which is its complement in God's new creation. At present, we who live are but one generation out of fifty, which since its formation have been new born into it, and endowed with spiritual life and the hope of glory. Fifty times as many Saints are in the invisible world sealed for immortality, as are now struggling on upon earth towards it; unless indeed the later generations have a greater measure of Saints than the former ones. Well then may the Church be called invisible, not only

as regards her vital principle, but in respect to her members. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and since God the Holy Ghost is invisible, so is His work. The Church is invisible, because the greater number of her true children have been perfected and removed, and because those who are still on earth cannot be ascertained by mortal eye; and had God so willed, she might have had no visible tokens at all of her existence, and been as entirely and absolutely hidden from us as the Holy Ghost is, her Lord and Governor. But seeing that the Holy Ghost is our life, so that to gain life we must approach Him, in mercy to us, His place of abode, the Church of the Living God, is not so utterly veiled from our eyes as He is; but He has given us certain outward signs, as tokens for knowing, and means for entering that living Shrine in which He dwells. He dwells in the hearts of His Saints, in that temple of living stones, on earth and in heaven, which is ever showing the glory of His kingdom, and talking of His power; but since faith and love and joy and peace cannot be seen, since the company of His people are His secret ones, He has given us something outward as a guide to what is inward, something visible as a guide to what is spiritual.

Now, what is that outward visible guide, having the dispensation of what is unseen, but the Christian Ministry, which directs and leads us to the very Holy of Holies, in which Christ dwells by His Spirit? As landmarks or buoys inform the steersman, as the shadow on the dial is an index of the sun's course; so, if we would cross the path of Christ, if we would arrest His eye and

engage His attention, if we would interest ourselves in the special virtue and fulness of His grace, we must join ourselves to that Ministry which, when He ascended up on high, He gave us as a relic, and let drop from Him as the mantle of Elijah, the pledge and token of his never-failing grace from age to age. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?"[4] Such is the petition, as it were, of the soul that seeks for Christ. His answer is as precise as the question. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the *footsteps* of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the *shepherds' tents.*" Out of the Church is no salvation;—I mean to say out of that great invisible company, who are one and all incorporate in the one mystical body of Christ, and quickened by one Spirit: now, by adhering to the visible Ministry which the Apostles left behind them, we approach unto what we see not, to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the spirits of the just, to the first-born elected to salvation, to Angels innumerable, to Jesus the One Mediator, and to God. This heavenly Jerusalem is the true Spouse of Christ and virgin Mother of Saints; and the visible ministry on earth, the Bishops and Pastors, together with Christians depending on them, at this or that day is *called* the Church, though really but a fragment of it, as being that part of it which is seen and can be pointed out, and as resembling it in type, and witnessing it, and leading towards it. This *invisible*

[4] Cant. i. 7, 8.

body is the *true* Church, because it changes not, though it is ever increasing. What it has, it keeps and never loses; but what is visible is fleeting and transitory, and continually passes off into the invisible. The visible is ever dying for the increase of the invisible company, and is ever reproduced from out the mass of human corruption, by the virtue of the Spirit lodged in the invisible, and acting upon the world. Generation after generation is born, tried, sifted, strengthened, and perfected. Again and again the Apostles live in their successors, and their successors in turn are gathered unto the Apostles. Such is the efficacy of that inexhaustible grace which Christ has lodged in His Church, as a principle of life and increase, till He comes again. The expiring breath of His Saints is but the quickening of dead souls.

And now we may form a clearer notion than is commonly taken of the one Church Catholic which is in all lands. Properly it is not on earth, except so far as heaven can be said to be on earth, or as the dead are still with us. It is not on earth, except in such sense as Christ or His Spirit are on earth. I mean it is not locally or visibly on earth. The Church is not in time or place, but in the region of spirits; it is in the Holy Ghost; and as the soul of man is in every part of his body, yet in no part, not here nor there, yet every where; not so in any one part, head or heart, hands or feet, as not to be in every other; so also the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of our new birth, is in all lands at once, fully and entirely as a spirit; in the East and in the West, in the North and in the South, — that is, wherever her outward instruments are to be found. The

Ministry and Sacraments, the bodily presence of Bishop and people, are given us as keys and spells, by which we bring ourselves into the presence of the great company of Saints; they are as much as this, but they are no more; they are not identical with that company; they are but the outskirts of it; they are but porches to the pool of Bethesda, entrances into that which is indivisible and one. Baptism admits, not into a mere visible society, varying with the country in which it is administered, Roman here, and Greek there, and English there, but *through* the English, *or* the Greek, *or* the Roman porch into the one invisible company of elect souls, which is independent of time and place, and untinctured with the imperfections or errors of that visible porch by which entrance is made. And its efficacy lies in the inflowing upon the soul of the grace of God lodged in that unseen body into which it opens, not, in any respect, in the personal character of those who administer or assist in it. When a child is brought for Baptism, the Church invisible claims it, begs it of God, receives it, and extends to it, as God's instrument, her own sanctity. When we praise God in Holy Communion, we praise Him with the Angels and Archangels, who are the guards, and with the Saints, who are the citizens of the City of God. When we offer our Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or partake of the sacred elements so offered, we solemnly eat and drink of the powers of the world to come. When we read the Psalms, we use before many witnesses the very words on which those witnesses themselves,—I mean, all successive generations of that holy company,—have sustained themselves

in their own day, for thousands of years past, during their pilgrimage heavenward. When we profess the Creed, it is no self-willed, arbitrary sense, but in the presence of those innumerable Saints who well remember what its words mean, and are witnesses of it before God, in spite of the heresy or indifference of this or that day. When we stand over their graves, we are in the very vestibule of that dwelling which is "all-glorious within," full of light and purity, and of voices crying, "Lord, how long?" When we pray in private, we are not solitary; others "are gathered together" with us "in Christ's Name," though we see them not, with Christ in the midst of them. When we approach the Ministry which He has ordained, we approach the steps of His throne. When we approach the Bishops, who are the centres of that Ministry, what have we before us but the Twelve Apostles, present but invisible? When we use the sacred Name of Jesus, or the Sign given us in Baptism, what do we but bid defiance to devils and evil men, and gain strength to resist them? When we protest, or confess, or suffer in the Name of Christ, what are we but ourselves types and symbols of the Cross of Christ, and of the strength of Him who died on it? When we are called to battle for the Lord, what are we who are seen, but mere outposts, the advanced guard of a mighty host, ourselves few in number and despicable, but bold beyond our numbers, because supported by chariots of fire and horses of fire round about the Mountain of the Lord of Hosts under which we stand?

Such is the City of God, the Holy Church Catholic throughout the world, manifested in and acting through

what is called in each country the Church visible; which visible Church really depends solely on it, on the invisible, —not on civil power, not on princes or any child of man, not on its endowments, not on its numbers, not on any thing that is seen, unless indeed heaven can depend on earth, eternity on time, Angels on men, the dead on the living. The unseen world through God's secret power and mercy, encroaches upon this world; and the Church that is seen is just that portion of it by which it encroaches; and thus though the visible Churches of the Saints in this world seem rare, and scattered to and fro, like islands in the sea, they are in truth but the tops of the everlasting hills, high and vast and deeply-rooted, which a deluge covers.

Now these thoughts are so very foreign from the world's ordinary view of things, which walks by sight, not by faith, and never allows any thing to exist in what comes before it, but what it can touch and handle, that it is necessary to insist and enlarge upon them. The world then makes *itself* the standard of perfection and the centre of all good; and when the souls of Christians pass from it into the place of spirits, it fancies that this is *their* loss, not its own; it pities them in its way of speaking of them, and calls them by names half compassionate, half contemptuous, as if its own presence and society were some great thing. It pities them too as thinking that they do not witness the termination of what they began or saw beginning, that they are ignorant of the fortunes of their friends or of the Church, are powerless over their own schemes, or rather careless about them, as being insensible, and but shadows, and ghosts not substances; as if we who live were the real

agents in the course of events, and they were attached to us only as a church-yard to a church, which it is decent to respect, unsuitable to linger in. Such is its opinion of the departed; as though *we* were in light and *they* in darkness,—we in power and influence, they in weakness,—we the living, and they the dead; yet with the views opened on us in the Gospel, with the knowledge that the One Spirit of Christ ever abides, and that those who are made one with Him are never parted from Him, and that those who die in Him are irrevocably knit into Him and one with Him, shall we dare to think slightly of these indefectible members of Christ and vessels of future glory? Shall we presume to compare that great assemblage of the elect, perfected and at rest, —shall we weigh in the balance that glorious Church invisible, so populous in souls, so pure from sin, so rid of probation,—with ourselves, poor strugglers with the flesh and the devil, who have but the earnest not the crown of victory, whose names are not so written in the heavens, but they may be blotted out again? Shall we doubt for a moment, though St. Paul was martyred centuries upon centuries since, that he, who even while in the body was present in spirit at Corinth when he was at Ephesus, is present in the Church still, more truly alive than those who are called living, more truly and awfully an Apostle now upon a throne, than when he had fightings without and fears within, a thorn in his flesh, and a martyrdom in prospect? Shall we be as infidels to suppose that the Church is only what she seems to be, a poor, helpless, despised, and human institution, scorned by the wealthy, plundered by the

violent, out-reasoned by the sophist, and patronized by the great, and not rather believe that she is serving in presence of the Eternal Throne, round which are the "four and twenty seats, and upon the seats" are "four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment," and "on their heads crowns of gold?"[5] Nay shall we not dimly recognize amid the aisles of our churches and along our cloisters, about our ancient tombs, and in ruined and desolate places, which once were held sacred, not in cold poetical fancy, but by the eye of faith,—the spirits of our fathers and brethren of every time, past and present, whose works have long been "known" to God, and whose former dwelling-places remain among us, pledges (as we trust) that He will not utterly forsake us, and make an end? Can aught mortal and earthly, force without, or treachery within, the popular voice, or any will of man, aught in the whole universe, height or depth, or any other creature, aught save the decree of God, issued for our sins, chase away our holy unseen companions from us, and level us with the grass of the field? Can all the efforts of the children of men, their accurate delineations of our outward form, their measurement of our visible territory, their summing up of our substance, their impairing of our civil rights, their numbering of our supporters, circumscribe the City of the Living God, or localize the site of Eden, and the Mountain of the Saints?

But here it may be asked, whether such a belief in the ever-abiding presence among us of the Church invisible, in that Spirit whom all believe to be ever present

[5] Rev. iv. 4.

with us to the end, does not interfere with our comfortable assurance that it is at rest. "Christ (it may be said) worketh hitherto as His Father worketh; and the Angels excel in strength; but human nature, even in its purest and more heavenly specimens, is unequal to this incessant watchfulness, and when it dies is said to fall asleep:—why should we not leave to it so comfortable and gracious a portion?" Now, however we answer this question, so far is certain, for we have St. Paul's authority for saying it, that in coming to the Church, we approach not God alone, nor Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, nor Angels innumerable, but also, as he says expressly, "the spirits of the just made perfect." And in thus speaking, he is evidently speaking neither of saints on earth nor saints after the resurrection, were it only that he designates especially "the *spirits* of the *just*." Certainly, then, the Church, in St. Paul's judgment, is made up of the dead as well as of the living; and though this be so, though the dead be present, it does not follow they are not at rest also. Such presence in the Church does not involve any labour or toil, any active interference, on the part of those who (we are told) "rest from their labours." For it is plain, though they "live unto God," and have power with Him, this does not imply that they *act*, or that they are *conscious* of their power. This holds good, through God's mercy, in the case of those who labour in the flesh, who pray and preach, work righteousness, and glorify God. They too see none of those fruits which notwithstanding do follow them. Had Noah, Daniel, and Job been in any evil city, and saved it by their righteousness from

destruction, would they have known what they were enabled to do? We have no reason to say they would; for it is one thing to do good, another to see we do it.

But again it may be quite true that in one sense they are at rest, and yet in another active promoters of the Church's welfare, as by prayer; though we know not *how* they are active, or *how* they are at rest, or *how* they can be both at once. It is said that God "rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had made," yet nevertheless that He "worketh hitherto." Surely, in Him who is eternal and all-sufficient, is found absolutely and perfectly that incomprehensible union of Almighty power with everlasting repose; and what He is in fulness, He may graciously impart in its degree, and according to their capacity to His chosen. If it is no contradiction in terms that God should rest and yet work, that the Son of God should die and yet have an eternal essence, that the Son of man should be in heaven while He spoke to Nicodemus, it may be no contradiction that the soul of man should sleep in the intermediate state, and yet be awake. I say, what God has infinitely and by nature, He may bestow in part to us; and thus it may be true that though the Saints are "joyful with glory," and "rejoice in their beds," and "the praises of God" are "in their mouths," yet at the same time "a two-edged sword" is "in their hands, to be avenged of the heathen, and to rebuke the people; to bind their kings in chains and their nobles with links of iron; that they may be avenged of them, as it is written: Such honour have all His Saints."[6]

[6] Ps. cxlix. 5–9.

Lastly, while we thus think of the invisible Church, we are restrained by many reasons from such invocations of her separate members as are unhappily so common in other Christian countries. First, because the practice was not primitive, but an addition when the world had poured into the Church; next, because we are told to pray to God only, and invocation may easily be corrupted into prayer, and then becomes idolatrous. And further, it must be considered that though the Church is represented in Scripture as a channel of God's gifts to us, yet it is only as a body and sacramentally, not as an agent, nor in her members one by one. St. Paul does not say that we are brought near to this saint or that saint, but to all together, "to the spirits of just men made perfect;" one by one they have to undergo the Day of Judgment, but as a body they are the City of God, the immaculate Spouse of the Lamb.

Let us then stand in that lot in which God has placed us, and thank Him for what He has so mercifully, so providentially done for us. He has done all things well,—neither too much nor too little. He has neither told us to neglect the faithful servants of Christ departed, nor to pay them undue honour; but to think of them, yet not speak to them; to make much of them, but to trust solely in Him. Let us follow His rule, neither exceeding nor wanting in our duty; but according to St. Paul's injunction, "using" His gifts "without abusing" them; not ceasing to use, lest we *should* abuse, but abstaining from the abuse, while we adhere thankfully to the use.

These are inspiring thoughts for the solitary, the dejected, the harassed, the defamed, or the despised

Christian; and they belong to him, if by act and deed he unites in that Communion which he professes. He joins the Church of God, not merely who speaks about it, or who defends it, or who contemplates it, but who loves it. He loves the unseen company of believers, who loves those who are seen. The test of our being joined to Christ is love; the test of love towards Christ and His Church, is loving those whom we actually see. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"[1] As then we would be worthy to hold communion with believers of every time and place, let us hold communion duly with those of our own day and our own neighbourhood. Let us pray God, to teach us what we are so deficient in, and save us from using words and cherishing thoughts which our actions put to shame. It is a very easy thing to say fine things, which we have no right to say. Let us feel tenderly affectioned towards all whom Christ has made His own by Baptism. Let us sympathize with them, and have kind thoughts towards them, and be warm-hearted, and loving, and simple-minded, and gentle-tempered towards them, and consult for their good, and pray for their growth in faith and holiness. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." For "God is love;" and if we love one another, "God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us."

[1] 1 John iv. 20.

SERMON XII.

The Church a Home for the Lonely.

"*Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*"—EPHES. ii. 6.

DID we from our youth up follow the guidings of God's grace, we should, without reasoning and without severe trial, understand that heaven is an object claiming our highest love and most persevering exertions. Such doubtless is the blessedness of some persons: such in a degree is perchance the blessedness of many. There are those who, like Samuel, dwell in the Temple of God holy and undefiled from infancy, and, after the instance of John the Baptist, are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, if not as he, from their mother's womb, yet from their second birth in Holy Baptism. And there are others who possess this great gift more or less, in whom the divine light has been preserved, even though it has been latent; not quenched or overborne by open sin, even though it has not been from the first duly prized and cherished. Many there are, one would hope, who keep their baptismal robes unstained, even though the wind and storm of this world, and the dust of sloth and carelessness for a while discolour them; till in due

season they arouse them from their dreams, and, before it is too late, give their hearts to God. All these, whether they have followed Him from infancy, or from childhood, or from boyhood, or from youth, or from opening manhood, have never been wedded to this world; they have never given their hearts to it, or vowed obedience or done folly in things of time and sense. And therefore they are able, from the very power of God's grace, as conveyed to them through the ordinances of the Gospel, to understand that the promise of heaven is the greatest, most blessed promise which could be given.

Others turn from God, and fall into courses of wilful sin, and they of course lose the divine light originally implanted; and if they are recovered are recovered by a severer discipline. They are recovered by finding disappointment and suffering from that which they had hoped would bring them good; they learn to love God and prize heaven, not by baptismal grace, but by trial of the world; they seek the world, and they are driven by the world back again to God. The world is blessed to them, in God's good providence, as an instrument of His grace transmuted from evil to good, as if a second sacrament, doing over again what was done in infancy, and then undone. They are led to say, with St. Peter, "Lord, to whom *shall* we go?" for they have tried the world, and it fails them; they have trusted it, and it deceives them; they have leant upon it, and it pierces them through; they have sought it for indulgence, and it has scourged them for their penance. O blessed lot of those, whose wanderings though they wander, are thus

overruled; that what they lose of the free gift of God, they regain by His compulsory remedies!

But almost all men, whether they are thereby moved to return to God or not, will on experience feel, and confess, and that in no long time, that the world is not enough for their happiness; and they accordingly seek means to supply their need, though they do not go to religion for it. Though they will not accept God's remedy, yet they confess that a remedy is needed, and have recourse to what they think will prove such. Though they may not love God and His holy heaven, yet they find they cannot take up with the world, or cast their lot with it wholly, much as they may wish it. This leads me to the subject which I propose to consider, as suggested by the text; viz. the need which mankind lies under of some shelter, refuge, rest, home or sanctuary from the outward world, and the shelter or secret place which God has provided for them in Christ.

By the world, I mean all that meets a man in intercourse with his fellow men, whether in public or in private, all that is new, strange, and without natural connexion with him. This outward world is at first sight most attractive and exciting to the generality of men. The young commonly wish to enter into it as if it would fulfil all their wants and hopes. They wish to enter into life, as it is called. Their hearts beat, as they anticipate the time when they shall, in one sense or other, be their own masters. At home, or at school, they are under restraint, and thus they come to look forward to the liberty of the world, and the independence of being in it, as a great good. According to their rank

in life, they wish to get into service, or they wish to go into business, or they wish to be principals in trade, or they wish to enter into the world's amusements and gaieties, or they look forward with interest to some profession or employment which stirs their ambition and promises distinction.

And when their wish is gratified, for a time all things perhaps go as they would have them. There is so much novelty, and so much interest in what takes place out of doors, that they find themselves as if in a new state of existence, and in one way or other "rejoice in their youth." Happy they who are otherwise circumstanced; for there *are* a number after all who may be said to have no youth; who from weak health, or from narrow circumstances, or from unkind superiors, or from family affliction, or from other causes, though in the world, have scarcely been exposed at all to its seductions, or have seen in it any thing to delight them, or to arrest their imagination or reason. God's providence has so ordered it for them, that, whatever be their peculiar trials and temptations, these do not come from the gaieties or the occupations of life. From the first they have only had experience of the world as a hard master, and owe it nothing. But whatever be our lot, whether to have had enjoyment from the world or not, whether we have not had the temptation of it, or not felt it, or felt it and overcome it, or felt it and been overcome, all men, whether religious or not, find in no long time that the world is insufficient for their happiness, and look elsewhere for repose.

Surely this is the case on all sides of us; the outward

world is found not to be enough for man, and he looks for some refuge near him, more intimate, more secret, more pure, more calm and stable. This is a main reason and a praiseworthy one, why a great number of the better sort of men look forward to marriage as the great object of life. They call it being settled, and so it is. The mind finds nothing to satisfy it in the employments and amusements of life, in its excitements, struggles, anxieties, efforts, aims, and victories. Supposing a man to make money, to get on in life, to rise in society, to gain power, whether in a higher or lower sphere, this does not suffice; he wants a home, he wants a centre on which to place his thoughts and affections, a secret dwelling-place which may soothe him after the troubles of the world, and which may be his hidden stay and support wherever he goes, and dwell in his heart, though it be not named upon his tongue. The world may seduce, may terrify, may mislead, may enslave, but it cannot really inspire confidence and love. There is no rest for us, except in quietness, confidence, and affection; and hence all men, without taking religion into account, seek to make themselves a home, as the only need of their nature, or are unhappy if they be without one. Thus they witness against the world, even though they be children of the world; witness against it equally with the holiest and most self-denying, who have by faith overcome it.

Here then Christ finds us, weary of that world in which we are obliged to live and act, whether as willing or unwilling slaves to it. He finds us needing and seeking a home, and making one, as we best may, by means of the creature, since it is all we can do. The

world, in which our duties lie, is as waste as the wilderness, as restless and turbulent as the ocean, as inconstant as the wind and weather. It has no substance in it, but is like a shade or phantom; when you pursue it, when you try to grasp it, it escapes from you, or it is malicious, and does you a mischief. We need something which the world cannot give: this is what we need, and this it is which the Gospel has supplied.

I say, that our Lord Jesus Christ, after dying for our sins on the Cross, and ascending on high, left not the world as He found it, but left a blessing behind Him. He left in the world what before was not in it,—a secret home, for faith and love to enjoy, wherever they are found, in spite of the world around us. Do you ask what it is? the chapter from which the text is taken describes it. It speaks of "the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone;" of "the Building fitly framed" and "growing unto an Holy Temple in the Lord;" of "a Habitation of God through the Spirit." This is the Church of God, which is our true Home of God's providing, His own heavenly court, where He dwells with Saints and Angels, into which He introduces us by a new birth, and in which we forget the outward world and its many troubles.

The Jews had some such refuge in their own material Temple, though of course it was far inferior to that which Christ has provided. Thrice a year did all the males from every quarter go up to Jerusalem to appear before God in it; and some holy persons were even allowed to dwell in it. Such were the prophet Samuel

in his youth, and Anna the prophetess in her old age; not to mention Priests and Levites, who were ever there by office. The Temple rose stately and beautiful upon Mount Zion, invited the worshipper, admitted him, hid him from the outward world, with all its miseries and offences, and brought him immediately into God's Presence. No wonder, then, that David speaks with such devout affection of it, and with such sorrow and longing when he is away. "O how amiable are Thy dwellings," he says, "Thou Lord of Hosts! My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be alway praising Thee. One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness." And again, "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" "O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling; and that I may go unto the altar of God, even unto the God of my joy and gladness; and upon the harp will I give thanks unto Thee, O God, my God." And again, "Behold now, praise the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord: ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord, even in the courts of the house of our God. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and praise the Lord."[1]

Such was the Jewish Temple; but, besides other deficiencies, as being visible and material, it was confined

[1] Ps. lxxxiv.; xlii.; xliii.; cxxxiv.

to one place. It could not be a home for the whole world, nay not for one nation, but only for a few out of the multitude. But the Christian Temple is invisible and spiritual, and hence admits of being every where. "The kingdom of God," says our Lord, speaking of it, "cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." And again to the Samaritan woman, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."[2] "In spirit and in truth;" for unless His Presence were invisible, it could not be real. That which is seen is not real; that which is material is dissoluble; that which is in time is temporary; that which is local is but partial. But the Christian Temple is wherever Christians are found in Christ's Name; it is as fully in each place as if it were in no other; and we may enter it, and appear among its holy inmates, God's heavenly family, as really as the Jewish worshipper betook himself to the visible courts of the Temple. We see nothing; but this I repeat, is a condition necessary to its being every where. It would not be every where, if we saw it any where; we see nothing; but we enjoy every thing.

And thus is it set before us in the Old Testament, whether in prophecy or by occasional anticipation.

[2] Luke xvii. 20, 21. John iv. 21–24.

Isaiah prophesies that "it shall come to pass, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and *all nations* shall flow into it." And it was shown by anticipation to Jacob, and Elisha's servant; to Jacob when he saw in his dream "a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold the Angels of God ascending and descending on it;" and to Elisha's servant when "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."[3] These were anticipations of what was to be continually, when Christ came and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers;" and what that opening consisted in, St. Paul tells us.—"Ye are come," he says, "unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." Such are the dwellers in our holy home; God Himself; Christ; the assembly of the first-born, such as the Apostles; Angels; and the spirits of the just. This being the case, no wonder the text actually speaks of the Church as heaven upon earth, saying that God "hath quickened us together with Christ, ... and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

What, then, the visible Temple was to the Jews, such

[3] Is. ii. 2. Gen. xxviii. 12. 2 Kings vi. 17.

and much more is the kingdom of heaven to us; it is really a refuge and hiding-place as theirs was, and shuts out the world. When men are distressed with anxiety, care, and disappointment, what do they? they take refuge in their families; they surround themselves with the charities of domestic life, and make for themselves an inner world, that their affections may have something to rest on. Such was the gift which inspired men anticipated, and we enjoy in the Christian Church. "*Hide me*," the Psalmist prays, "from the gathering together of the froward, and from the insurrection of wicked doers." Again: "Keep me as the apple of an eye; *hide* me under the shadow of Thy wings; from the ungodly that trouble me." Again; "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and receivest unto Thee; he shall dwell in Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy House, even of Thy Holy Temple: Thou shalt show us wonderful things in Thy righteousness, O God of our salvation." And again; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple: for in the time of trouble He shall *hide* me in His Tabernacle, yea, in the secret place of His dwelling shall He *hide* me, and set me up upon a rock of stone." Again; "Thou art a place to *hide* me in, Thou shalt preserve me from trouble." Once more; "O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee Thou shalt *hide* them privily *by Thine own presence* from the provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them *secretly* in Thy tabernacle

from the strife of tongues. Thanks be to the Lord; for He hath shewed me marvellous great kindness in a strong city." And in like manner the Prophets; for instance, the Prophet Isaiah says, "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment, and a man shall be as an *hiding-place* from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Again; "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest." "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in; Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." And again; "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet-resting places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest." With which agree many texts in the New Testament, such as St. Paul's words to the Colossians, "Your life is *hid* with Christ in God."[4]

Now what has been said, little as it is to what might be brought together on the subject, may suffice to suggest to us that great privilege which we may enjoy if we seek it, of dwelling in a heavenly home in the midst of this turbulent world. The world is no helpmeet for man,

[4] Ps. lxiv.; xvii.; lxv.; xxvii.; xxxii.; xxxi. Isai. xxxii.; xxv.; xxvi. Col. iii.

and a helpmeet he needs. No one, man nor woman, can stand alone; we are so constituted by nature; and the world, instead of helping us, is an open adversary. It but increases our solitariness. Elijah cried, "I, I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away."[5] How did Almighty God answer him? by graciously telling him that He had reserved to Himself a remnant of seven thousand true believers. Such is the blessed truth which He brings home to us also. We may be full of sorrows; there may be fightings without and fears within; we may be exposed to the frowns, censure, or contempt of men; we may be shunned by them; or, to take the lightest case, we may be (as we certainly shall be) wearied out by the unprofitableness of this world, by its coldness, unfriendliness, distance, and dreariness; we shall need something nearer to us. What is our resource? It is not in arm of man, in flesh and blood, in voice of friend, or in pleasant countenance; it is that holy home which God has given us in His Church; it is that everlasting City in which He has fixed His abode. It is that Mount invisible whence Angels are looking at us with their piercing eyes, and the voices of the dead call us. "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world;" "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Great privilege indeed, if we did but realize its greatness! Man seeks the creature when the world distresses him; let us seek the Creator; let us "seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face evermore." Let us turn from the world, let us hide ourselves in His dwelling-place, let us shroud ourselves from the earth, and

[5] 1 Kings xix. 10.

disappear in the spiritual kingdom of our God. Great benefit indeed beyond thought, thus to ally ourselves with the upper creation of God instead of taking our portion with the lower! What can we want more than this, whether to satisfy our real wants or our own feeling of them? Do we need aid and comfort? Can any thing of this world impart such strength, as He who is present in that Sanctuary which He has given us? Do we need images and ideas to occupy our minds for encouragement and comfort, as intelligible companions, which we may think of and dwell upon, and hold communion with, and be one with? What fellowship can be more glorious, more satisfying than that which we may hold with those inmates of the City of God whom St. Paul enumerates? Leave then this earthly scene, O virgin soul, though most attractive and most winning; aim at a higher prize, a nobler companionship. Enter into the tabernacle of God. "Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under His feathers. Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day. Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet." Satan may do his worst; he may afflict thee sore, he may wound thee, he may brand thee, he may cripple thee, as regards *this* world; but he cannot touch thee in things spiritual; he has no power over thee to bring thee into sin and God's displeasure. O virgin soul, let this be thy stay in the dark day. When thou art sick of the world, to

whom shouldst thou go? to none short of Him who is the Heavenly Spouse of every faithful soul. Yield thyself to Him freely and without guile. "He will bring thee to the banqueting house, and His banner over thee shall be love. He will make thee to sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit shall be sweet to thy taste." Thou needest covet nothing on earth; thou art full and aboundest; houses, and lands, and brethren, and parents, and wife, and children, are more than made up by "the special gift of faith, more acceptable to thy mind."[6] Though thou art in a body of flesh, a member of this world, thou hast but to kneel down reverently in prayer, and thou art at once in the society of Saints and Angels. Wherever thou art, thou canst, through God's incomprehensible mercy, in a moment bring thyself into the midst of God's holy Church invisible, and receive secretly that aid, the very thought of which is a present sensible blessing. Art thou afflicted? thou canst pray; art thou merry? thou canst sing psalms. Art thou lonely? does the day run heavily? fall on thy knees, and thy thoughts are at once relieved by the idea and by the reality of thy unseen companions. Art thou tempted to sin? think steadily of those who perchance witness thy doings from God's secret dwelling-place; hast thou lost friends? realize them by faith; art thou slandered? thou hast the praise of Angels; art thou under trial? thou hast their sympathy.

May thoughts like these, my brethren, sink deep into your hearts, and bring forth good fruit in holiness and

[6] Wisd. iii. 14.

constancy of obedience. Whatever has been your past life, whether (blessed be God) you have never trusted aught but God's sacred light within you, or whether you have trusted the world and it has failed you, God's mercies in Christ are here offered to you in full abundance. Come to Him for them; approach Him in the way He has appointed, and you shall find Him, as He has said, upon His Holy Hill of Zion. Let not your past sins keep you from Him. Whatever they be, they cannot interfere with His grace stored up for all who come to Him for it. If you have in past years neglected Him, perchance you will have to suffer for it; but fear not; He will give you grace and strength to bear such punishment as He may be pleased to inflict. Let not the thought of His just severity keep you at a distance. He can make even pain pleasant to you. Keeping from Him is not to escape from His power, only from His love. Surrender yourselves to Him in faith and holy fear. He is All-merciful, though All-righteous; and though He is awful in His judgments, He is nevertheless more wonderfully pitiful, and of tender compassion above our largest expectations; and in the case of all who humbly seek Him, He will in "wrath remember mercy."

SERMON XIII.

The Invisible World.

"*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"—2 COR. iv. 18.

THERE are two worlds, "the visible and the invisible," as the Creed speaks,—the world we see, and the world we do not see; and the world which we do not see as really exists as the world we do see. It really exists, though we see it not. The world that we see we know to exist, *because* we see it. We have but to lift up our eyes and look around us, and we have proof of it: our eyes tell us. We see the sun, moon and stars, earth and sky, hills and valleys, woods and plains, seas and rivers. And again, we see men, and the works of men. We see cities, and stately buildings, and their inhabitants; men running to and fro, and busying themselves to provide for themselves and their families, or to accomplish great designs, or for the very business' sake. All that meets our eyes forms one world. It is an immense world; it reaches to the stars. Thousands on thousands of years might we speed up the sky, and though we were swifter than the light itself, we should not reach them all. They

are at distances from us greater than any that is assignable. So high, so wide, so deep is the world; and yet it also comes near and close to us. It is every where; and it seems to leave no room for any other world.

And yet in spite of this universal world which we see, there is another world, quite as far-spreading, quite as close to us, and more wonderful; another world all around us, though we see it not, and more wonderful than the world we see, for this reason if for no other, that we do not see it. All around us are numberless objects, coming and going, watching, working or waiting, which we see not: this is that other world, which the eyes reach not unto, but faith only.

Let us dwell upon this thought. We are born into a world of sense; that is, of the real things which lie round about us, one great department comes to us, accosts us, through our bodily organs, our eyes, ears, and fingers. We feel, hear, and see them; and we know they exist, because we do thus perceive them. Things innumerable lie about us, animate and inanimate; but one particular class of these innumerable things is thus brought home to us through our senses. And moreover, while they act upon us, they make their presence known. We are sensible of them at the time, we are conscious that we perceive them. We not only see, but know that we see them; we not only hold intercourse, but know that we do. We are among men, and we know that we are. We feel cold and hunger; we know what sensible things remove them. We eat, drink, clothe ourselves, dwell in houses, converse and act with others, and perform the duties of social life; and we feel vividly that we are do-

ing so, while we do so. Such is our relation towards one part of the innumerable beings which lie around us. They act upon us, and we know it; and we act upon them in turn, and know we do.

But all this does not interfere with the existence of that other world which I speak of, acting upon us, yet not impressing us with the consciousness that it does so. It may as really be present and exert an influence as that which reveals itself to us. And that such a world there is, Scripture tells us. Do you ask what it is, and what it contains? I will not say that all that belongs to it is vastly more important than what we see, for among things visible are our fellow-men, and nothing created is more precious and noble than a son of man. But still, taking the things which we see altogether, and the things we do not see altogether, the world we do not see is on the whole a much higher world than that which we do see. For, first of all, He is there who is above all beings, who has created all, before whom they all are as nothing, and with whom nothing can be compared. Almighty God, we know, exists more really and absolutely than any of those fellow-men whose existence is conveyed to us through the senses; yet we see Him not, hear Him not, we do but "feel after Him," yet without finding Him. It appears, then, that the things which are seen are but a part, and but a secondary part of the beings about us, were it only on this ground, that Almighty God, the Being of beings, is not in their number, but among "the things which are not seen." Once, and once only, for thirty-three years, has He condescended to become one of the beings which are seen,

when He, the second Person of the Ever-blessed Trinity, was, by an unspeakable mercy, born of the Virgin Mary into this sensible world. And then He was seen, heard, handled; He ate, He drank, He slept, He conversed, He went about, He acted as other men: but excepting this brief period, His presence has never been perceptible; He has never made us conscious of His existence by means of our senses. He came, and He retired beyond the veil: and to us individually, it is as if He had never shown Himself; we have as little sensible experience of His presence. Yet "He liveth evermore."

And in that other world are the souls also of the dead. They too, when they depart hence, do not cease to exist, but they retire from this visible scene of things; or, in other words, they cease to act towards us and before us *through our senses.* They live as they lived before; but that outward frame, through which they were able to hold communion with other men, is in some way, we know not how, separated from them, and dries away and shrivels up as leaves may drop off a tree. They remain, but without the usual means of approach towards us, and correspondence with us. As when a man loses his voice or hand, he still exists as before, but cannot any longer talk or write, or otherwise hold intercourse with us; so when he loses not voice and hand only, but his whole frame, or is said to die, there is nothing to show that he is gone, but we have lost our means of apprehending him.

Again: Angels also are inhabitants of the world invisible, and concerning them much more is told us than concerning the souls of the faithful departed, because the latter "rest from their labours;" but the Angels are

actively employed among us in the Church. They are said to be "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."[1] No Christian is so humble but he has Angels to attend on him, if he lives by faith and love. Though they are so great, so glorious, so pure, so wonderful, that the very sight of them (if we were allowed to see them) would strike us to the earth, as it did the prophet Daniel, holy and righteous as he was; yet they are our "fellow-servants" and our fellow-workers, and they carefully watch over and defend even the humblest of us, if we be Christ's. That they form a part of our unseen world, appears from the vision seen by the patriarch Jacob. We are told that when he fled from his brother Esau, "he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun had set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep."[2] How little did he think that there was any thing very wonderful in this spot! It looked like any other spot. It was a lone, uncomfortable place: there was no house there: night was coming on; and he had to sleep upon the bare rock. Yet how different was the truth! He saw but the world that is seen; he saw not the world that is not seen; yet the world that is not seen was there. It was there, though it did not at once make known its presence, but needed to be supernaturally displayed to him. He saw it in his sleep. "He dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached up to heaven; and behold, the Angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord

[1] Heb. i. 14. [2] Gen. xxviii. 11.

stood above it." This was the other world. Now, let this be observed. Persons commonly speak as if the other world did not exist now, but would after death. No: it exists now, though we see it not. It is among us and around us. Jacob was shown this in his dream. Angels were all about him, though he knew it not. And what Jacob saw in his sleep, that Elisha's servant saw as if with his eyes; and the shepherds, at the time of the Nativity, not only saw, but heard. They heard the voices of those blessed spirits who praise God day and night, and whom we, in our lower state of being, are allowed to copy and assist.

We are then in a world of spirits, as well as in a world of sense, and we hold communion with it, and take part in it, though we are not conscious of doing so. If this seems strange to any one, let him reflect that we are undeniably taking part in a third world, which we do indeed see, but about which we do not know more than about the Angelic hosts,—the world of brute animals. Can any thing be more marvellous or startling, unless we were used to it, than that we should have a race of beings about us whom we do but see, and as little know their state, or can describe their interests, or their destiny, as we can tell of the inhabitants of the sun and moon? It is indeed a very overpowering thought, when we get to fix our minds on it, that we familiarly use, I may say hold intercourse with creatures who are as much strangers to us, as mysterious, as if they were the fabulous, unearthly beings, more powerful than man, and yet his slaves, which Eastern superstitions have invented. We have more real knowledge about the Angels

than about the brutes. They have apparently passions, habits, and a certain accountableness, but all is mystery about them. We do not know whether they can sin or not, whether they are under punishment, whether they are to live after this life. We inflict very great sufferings on a portion of them, and they in turn, every now and then, seem to retaliate upon us, as if by a wonderful law. We depend upon them in various important ways; we use their labour, we eat their flesh. This however relates to such of them as come near us: cast your thoughts abroad on the whole number of them, large and small, in vast forests, or in the water, or in the air; and then say whether the presence of such countless multitudes, so various in their natures, so strange and wild in their shapes, living on the earth without ascertainable object, is not as mysterious as any thing which Scripture says about the Angels? Is it not plain to our senses that there is a world inferior to us in the scale of beings, with which we are connected without understanding what it is? and is it difficult to faith to admit the word of Scripture concerning our connection with a world superior to us?

When, indeed, persons feel it so difficult to conceive the existence among us of the world of spirits, because they are not aware of it, they should recollect how many worlds all at once are in fact contained in human society itself. We speak of the political world, the scientific, the learned, the literary, the religious world; and suitably: for men are so closely united with some men, and so divided from others, they have such distinct objects of pursuit one from another, and such distinct principles

and engagements in consequence, that in one and the same place there exist together a number of circles or (as they may be called) worlds, made up of visible men, but themselves invisible, unknown, nay, unintelligible to each other. Men move about in the common paths of life, and look the same; but there is little community of feeling between them; each knows little about what goes on in any other sphere than his own; and a stranger coming into any neighbourhood would, according to his own pursuits or acquaintances, go away with an utterly distinct or a reverse impression of it, viewed as a whole. Or again, leave for a while the political and commercial excitement of some large city, and take refuge in a secluded village; and there, in the absence of news of the day, consider the mode of life and habits of mind, the employments and views of its inhabitants; and say whether the world, when regarded in its separate portions, is not more unlike itself than it is unlike the world of Angels which Scripture places in the midst of it?

The world of spirits then, though unseen, is present; present, not future, not distant. It is not above the sky, it is not beyond the grave; it is now and here; the kingdom of God is among us. Of this the text speaks;— "We look," says St. Paul, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." You see he regarded it as a practical truth, which was to influence our conduct. Not only does he speak of the world invisible, but of the duty of "looking at" it; not only does he contrast the things of time with it, but says that their belonging to time

is a reason, not for looking at, but for looking off them. Eternity was not distant because it reached to the future; nor the unseen state without its influence on us, because it was impalpable. In like manner, he says in another Epistle, "Our conversation is in heaven." And again, "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And again, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." And to the same purport are St. Peter's words, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And again, St. Paul speaking of the Apostles, "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to Angels, and to men." And again in words already quoted, he speaks of the Angels as "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."[3]

Such is the hidden kingdom of God; and, as it is now hidden, so in due season it shall be revealed. Men think that they are lords of the world, and may do as they will. They think this earth their property, and its movements in their power; whereas it has other lords besides them, and is the scene of a higher conflict than they are capable of conceiving. It contains Christ's little ones whom they despise, and His Angels whom they disbelieve; and these at length shall take possession of it and be manifested. At present, "all things," to appearance, "continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;" and scoffers ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" but at the appointed time there will be a

[3] Phil. iii. 20. Eph. ii. 6. Col. iii. 3. 1 Pet. i. 8. 1 Cor. iv. 9. Heb. i. 14.

"manifestation of the sons of God," and the hidden saints "shall shine out as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." When the Angels appeared to the shepherds it was a sudden appearance,—"*Suddenly* there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host." How wonderful a sight! The night had before that seemed just like any other night; as the evening on which Jacob saw the vision seemed like any other evening. They were keeping watch over their sheep; they were watching the night as it passed. The stars moved on,—it was midnight. They had no idea of such a thing when the Angel appeared. Such are the power and virtue hidden in things which are seen, and at God's will they are manifested. They were manifested for a moment to Jacob, for a moment to Elisha's servant, for a moment to the shepherds. They will be manifested for ever when Christ comes at the Last Day "in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels." Then this world will fade away and the other world will shine forth.

Let these be your thoughts my brethren, especially in the spring season, when the whole face of nature is so rich and beautiful. Once only in the year, yet once, does the world which we see show forth its hidden powers, and in a manner manifest itself. Then the leaves come out, and the blossoms on the fruit trees and flowers; and the grass and corn spring up. There is a sudden rush and burst outwardly of that hidden life which God has lodged in the material world. Well, that shows you, as by a sample, what it can do at God's command, when He gives the word. This earth, which now buds forth in leaves and blossoms, will one day

burst forth into a new world of light and glory, in which, we shall see Saints and Angels dwelling. Who would think, except from his experience of former springs all through his life, who could conceive two or three months before, that it was possible that the face of nature, which then seemed so lifeless, should become so splendid and varied? How different is a tree, how different is a prospect, when leaves are on it and off it! How unlikely it would seem, before the event, that the dry and naked branches should suddenly be clothed with what is so bright and so refreshing! Yet in God's good time leaves come on the trees. The season may delay, but come it will at last. So it is with the coming of that Eternal Spring, for which all Christians are waiting. Come it will, though it delay; yet though it tarry, let us wait for it, "because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Therefore we say day by day, "Thy kingdom come;" which means,—O Lord, show Thyself; manifest Thyself; Thou that sittest between the Cherubim, show Thyself; stir up Thy strength and come and help us. The earth that we see does not satisfy us; it is but a beginning; it is but a promise of something beyond it; even when it is gayest, with all its blossoms on, and shows most touchingly what lies hid in it, yet it is not enough. We know much more lies hid in it than we see. A world of Saints and Angels, a glorious world, the palace of God, the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, the heavenly Jerusalem, the throne of God and Christ, all these wonders, everlasting, all-precious, mysterious, and incomprehensible, lie hid in what we see. What we see is the outward shell of an eternal kingdom; and on

that kingdom we fix the eyes of our faith. Shine forth, O Lord, as when on Thy Nativity Thine Angels visited the shepherds; let Thy glory blossom forth as bloom and foliage on the trees ; change with Thy mighty power this visible world into that diviner world, which as yet we see not; destroy what we see, that it may pass and be transformed into what we believe. Bright as is the sun, and the sky, and the clouds; green as are the leaves and the fields ; sweet as is the singing of the birds; we know that they are not all, and we will not take up with a part for the whole. They proceed from a centre of love and goodness, which is God himself; but they are not His fulness ; they speak of heaven, but they are not heaven; they are but as stray beams and dim reflections of His Image ; they are but crumbs from the table. We are looking for the coming of the day of God, when all this outward world, fair though it be, shall perish ; when the heavens shall be burnt, and the earth melt away. We can bear the loss, for we know it will be but the removing of a veil. We know that to remove the world which is seen, will be the manifestation of the world which is not seen. We know that what we see is as a screen hiding from us God and Christ, and His Saints and Angels. And we earnestly desire and pray for the dissolution of all that we see, from our longing after that which we do not see.

O blessed they indeed, who are destined for the sight of those wonders in which they now stand, at which they now look, but which they do not recognize ! Blessed they who shall at length behold what as yet mortal eye hath not seen and faith only enjoys ! Those wonderful

things of the new world are even now as they shall be then. They are immortal and eternal; and the souls who shall then be made conscious of them, will see them in their calmness and their majesty where they ever have been. But who can express the surprise and rapture which will come upon those, who then at last apprehend them for the first time, and to whose perceptions they are new! Who can imagine by a stretch of fancy the feelings of those who having died in faith, wake up to enjoyment! The life then begun, we know, will last for ever; yet surely if memory be to us then what it is now, that will be a day much to be observed unto the Lord through all the ages of eternity. We may increase indeed for ever in knowledge and in love, still that first waking from the dead, the day at once of our birth and our espousals, will ever be endeared and hallowed in our thoughts. When we find ourselves after long rest gifted with fresh powers, vigorous with the seed of eternal life within us, able to love God as we wish, conscious that all trouble, sorrow, pain, anxiety, bereavement, is over for ever, blessed in the full affection of those earthly friends whom we loved so poorly, and could protect so feebly, while they were with us in the flesh, and above all, visited by the immediate visible ineffable Presence of God Almighty, with his Only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and His Co-equal Co-eternal Spirit, that great sight in which is the fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore,—what deep, incommunicable, unimaginable thoughts will be then upon us! what depths will be stirred up within us! what secret harmonies awakened, of which human nature seemed incapable! Earthly words

are indeed all worthless to minister to such high anticipations. Let us close our eyes and keep silence.

"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand for ever."[4]

[4] Isai. xl. 6-8.

SERMON XIV.

The Greatness and Littleness of Human Life.

"*The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.*"—GEN. xlvii. 9.

WHY did the aged Patriarch call his days few, who had lived twice as long as men now live, when he spoke? why did he call them evil, seeing he had on the whole lived in riches and honour, and, what is more, in God's favour? yet he described his time as short, his days as evil, and his life as but a pilgrimage. Or if we allow that his afflictions were such as to make him reasonably think cheaply of his life, in spite of the blessings which attended it, yet that he should call it short, considering he had so much more time for the highest purposes of his being than we have, is at first sight surprising. He alludes indeed to the longer life which had been granted to his fathers, and perhaps felt a decrepitude greater than theirs had been; yet this difference between him and them could hardly be the real ground of his complaint in the text, or more than a confirmation or occasion of it. It was not because Abraham had lived one

hundred and seventy-five years, and Isaac one hundred and eighty, and he himself, whose life was not yet finished, but one hundred and thirty, that he made this mournful speech. For it matters not, when time is gone, what length it has been; and this doubtless was the real cause why the Patriarch spoke as he did, not because his life was shorter than his fathers', but because it was well nigh over. When life is past, it is all one whether it has lasted two hundred years or fifty. And it is this characteristic, stamped on human life in the day of its birth, viz. that it is mortal, which makes it under all circumstances and in every form equally feeble and despicable. All the points in which men differ, health and strength, high or low estate, happiness or misery, vanish before this common lot, mortality. Pass a few years, and the longest-lived will be gone; nor will what is past profit him then, except in its consequences.

And this sense of the nothingness of life, impressed on us by the very fact that it comes to an end, is much deepened, when we contrast it with the capabilities of us who live it. Had Jacob lived Methuselah's age, he would have called it short. This is what we all feel, though at first sight it seems a contradiction, that even though the days as they go be slow, and be laden with many events, or with sorrows or dreariness, lengthening them out and making them tedious, yet the year passes quick though the hours tarry, and time bygone is as a dream, though we thought it would never go while it was going. And the reason seems to be this; that, when we contemplate human life in itself, in however small a portion of it, we see implied in it the presence of a soul,

the energy of a spiritual existence, of an accountable being; consciousness tells us this concerning it every moment. But when we look back on it in memory, we view it but externally, as a mere lapse of time, as a mere earthly history. And the longest duration of this external world is as dust and weighs nothing, against one moment's life of the world within. Thus we are ever expecting great things from life, from our internal consciousness every moment of our having souls; and we are ever being disappointed, on considering what we have gained from time past, or can hope from time to come. And life is ever promising and never fulfilling; and hence, however long it be, our days are few and evil. This is the particular view of the subject on which I shall now dwell.

Our earthly life then gives promise of what it does not accomplish. It promises immortality, yet it is mortal; it contains life in death and eternity in time; and it attracts us by beginnings which faith alone brings to an end. I mean, when we take into account the powers with which our souls are gifted as Christians, the very consciousness of these fills us with a certainty that they must last beyond this life; that is in the case of good and holy men, whose present state I say, is to them who know them well, an earnest of immortality. The greatness of their gifts, contrasted with their scanty time for exercising them, forces the mind forward to the thought of another life, as almost the necessary counterpart and consequence of this life, and certainly implied in this life, provided there be a righteous Governor of the world who does not make man for nought.

This is a thought which will come upon us not always, but under circumstances. And many perhaps of those who at first hearing may think they never felt it, may recognize what I mean, while I describe it.

I mean, when one sees some excellent person, whose graces we know, whose kindliness, affectionateness, tenderness, and generosity,—when we see him dying (let him have lived ever so long; I am not supposing a premature death; let him live out his days), the thought is forced upon us with a sort of surprise; "Surely, he is not to die yet; he has not yet had any opportunity of exercising duly those excellent gifts with which God has endowed him." Let him have lived seventy or eighty years, yet it seems as if he had done nothing at all, and his life were scarcely begun. He has lived all his days perhaps in a private sphere; he has been engaged on a number of petty matters which died with the day, and yielded no apparent fruit. He has had just enough of trial under various circumstances, to evidence, but not adequately to employ, what was in him. He has, we perhaps perceive, a noble benevolence of mind, a warmth of heart, and a beneficent temper, which, had it the means, would scatter blessings on every side; yet he has never been rich,—he dies poor. We have been accustomed to say to ourselves, "What would such a one be were he wealthy?" not as fancying he ever *will* have riches, but from feeling how he would become them; yet, when he actually does die as he lived, without them, we feel somehow disappointed,—there has been a failure,—his mind, we think, has never reached its scope,—he has had a treasure within him which has

never been used. His days have been but few and evil, and have become old unseasonably, compared with his capabilities; and we are driven by a sense of these, to look on to a future state as a time when they will be brought out and come into effect. I am not attempting by such reflections to prove that there is a future state; let us take that for granted. I mean, over and above our positive belief in this great truth, we are actually driven to a belief, we attain a sort of sensible conviction of that life to come, a certainty striking home to our hearts and piercing them, by this imperfection in what is present. The very greatness of our powers makes this life look pitiful; the very pitifulness of this life forces on our thoughts to another; and the prospect of another gives a dignity and value to this life which promises it; and thus this life is at once great and little, and we rightly contemn it while we exalt its importance.

And, if this life is short, even when longest, from the great disproportion between it and the powers of regenerate man, still more is this the case, of course, where it is cut short, and death comes prematurely. Men there are, who, in a single moment of their lives, have shown a superhuman height and majesty of mind which it would take ages for them to employ on its proper objects, and, as it were, to exhaust; and who by such passing flashes, like rays of the sun, and the darting of lightning, give token of their immortality, give token to us that they are but Angels in disguise, the elect of God sealed for eternal life, and destined to judge the world and to reign with Christ for ever. Yet they are sud-

denly taken away, and we have hardly recognized them when we lose them. Can we believe that they are not removed for higher things elsewhere? This is sometimes said with reference to our intellectual powers; but it is still more true of our moral nature. There is something in moral truth and goodness, in faith, in firmness, in heavenly-mindedness, in meekness, in courage, in loving-kindness, to which this world's circumstances are quite unequal, for which the longest life is insufficient, which makes the highest opportunities of this world disappointing, which must burst the prison of this world to have its appropriate range. So that when a good man dies, one is led to say, "He has not half showed himself, he has had nothing to exercise him; his days are gone like a shadow, and he is withered like grass."

I say the word "disappointing" is the only word to express our feelings on the death of God's saints. Unless our faith be very active, so as to pierce beyond the grave, and realize the future, we feel depressed at what seems like a failure of great things. And from this very feeling surely, by a sort of contradiction, we may fairly take hope; for if this life be so disappointing, so unfinished, surely it is not the whole. This feeling of disappointment will often come upon us in an especial way on happening to hear of or to witness the deathbeds of holy men. The hour of death seems to be a season, of which, in the hands of Providence, much might be *made*, if I may use the term; much might be done for the glory of God, the good of man, and the manifestation of the person dying. And beforehand friends will perhaps look forward, and expect that great things are then to

take place, which they shall never forget. Yet, "how dieth the wise man? as the fool."[1] Such is the preacher's experience, and our own bears witness to it. King Josiah, the zealous servant of the Living God, died the death of wicked Ahab, the worshipper of Baal. True Christians die as other men. One dies by a sudden accident, another in battle, another without friends to see how he dies, a fourth is insensible or not himself. Thus the opportunity seems thrown away, and we are forcibly reminded that "the manifestation of the sons of God"[2] is hereafter; that "the earnest expectation of the creature" is but waiting for it; that this life is unequal to the burden of so great an office as the due exhibition of those secret ones who shall one day "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."[3]

But further (if it be allowable to speculate), one can even conceive the same kind of feeling, and a most transporting one, to come over the soul of the faithful Christian, when just separated from the body, and conscious that his trial is once for all over. Though his life has been a long and painful discipline, yet when it is over, we may suppose him to feel at the moment the same sort of surprise at its being ended, as generally follows any exertion in this life, when the object is gained and the anticipation over. When we have wound up our minds for any point of time, any great event, an interview with strangers, or the sight of some wonder, or the occasion of some unusual trial, when it comes, and is gone, we have a strange reverse of feeling from our changed circumstances. Such, but without any

[1] Eccles. ii. 16. [2] Rom. viii. 19. [3] Matt. xiii. 43.

mixture of pain, without any lassitude, dulness, or disappointment, may be the happy contemplation of the disembodied spirit; as if it said to itself, "So all is now over; this is what I have so long waited for; for which I have nerved myself; against which I have prepared, fasted, prayed, and wrought righteousness. Death is come and gone,—it is over. Ah! is it possible? What an easy trial, what a cheap price for eternal glory! A few sharp sicknesses, or some acute pain awhile, or some few and evil years, or some struggles of mind, dreary desolateness for a season, fightings and fears, afflicting bereavements, or the scorn and ill-usage of the world,—how they fretted me, how much I thought of them, yet how little really they are! How contemptible a thing is human life,—contemptible in itself, yet in its effects invaluable! for it has been to me like a small seed of easy purchase, germinating and ripening into bliss everlasting."

Such being the unprofitableness of this life, viewed in itself, it is plain how we should regard it while we go through it. We should remember that it is scarcely more than an accident of our being—that it is no part of ourselves, who are immortal; that we are immortal spirits, independent of time and space, and that this life is but a sort of outward stage, on which we act for a time, and which is only sufficient and only intended to answer the purpose of trying whether we will serve God or no. We should consider ourselves to be in this world in no fuller sense than players in any game are in the game; and life to be a sort of dream, as detached and as different from our real eternal existence, as a dream differs from

waking; a serious dream, indeed, as affording a means of judging us, yet in itself a kind of shadow without substance, a scene set before us, in which we seem to be, and in which it is our duty to act just as if all we saw had a truth and reality, because all that meets us influences us and our destiny. The regenerate soul is taken into communion with Saints and Angels, and its "life is hid with Christ in God;"[4] it has a place in God's court, and is not of this world,—looking into this world as a spectator might look at some show or pageant, except when called from time to time to take a part. And while it obeys the instinct of the senses, it does so for God's sake, and it submits itself to things of time so far as to be brought to perfection by them, that, when the veil is withdrawn and it sees itself to be, where it ever has been, in God's kingdom, it may be found worthy to enjoy it. It is this view of life, which removes from us all surprise and disappointment that it is so incomplete: as well might we expect any chance event which happens in the course of it to be complete, any casual conversation with a stranger, or the toil or amusement of an hour.

Let us then thus account of our present state: it is precious as revealing to us, amid shadows and figures, the existence and attributes of Almighty God and His elect people: it is precious, because it enables us to hold intercourse with immortal souls who are on their trial as we are. It is momentous, as being the scene and means of our trial; but beyond this it has no claims upon us. "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, all is vanity." We may be poor or rich, young or old, honoured

[4] Col. iii. 3.

or slighted, and it ought to affect us no more, neither to elate us nor depress us, than if we were actors in a play, who know that the characters they represent are not their own, and that though they may appear to be superior one to another, to be kings or to be peasants, they are in reality all on a level. The one desire which should move us should be, first of all, that of seeing Him face to face, who is now hid from us; and next of enjoying eternal and direct communion, in and through Him, with our friends around us, whom at present we know only through the medium of sense, by precarious and partial channels, which give us little insight into their hearts.

These are suitable feelings towards this attractive but deceitful world. What have we to do with its gifts and honours, who, having been already baptized into the world to come, are no longer citizens of this? Why should we be anxious for a long life, or wealth, or credit, or comfort, who know that the next world will be every thing which our hearts can wish, and that not in appearance only, but truly and everlastingly? Why should we rest in this world, when it is the token and promise of another? Why should we be content with its surface, instead of appropriating what is stored beneath it? To those who live by faith, every thing they see speaks of that future world; the very glories of nature, the sun, moon, and stars, and the richness and the beauty of the earth, are as types and figures witnessing and teaching the invisible things of God. All that we see is destined one day to burst forth into a heavenly bloom, and to be transfigured into immortal glory. Heaven at present is out of sight, but in due time, as snow melts and discovers

what it lay upon, so will this visible creation fade away before those greater splendours which are behind it, and on which at present it depends. In that day shadows will retire, and the substance show itself. The sun will grow pale and be lost in the sky, but it will be before the radiance of Him whom it does but image, the Sun of Righteousness, with healing on His wings, who will come forth in visible form, as a bridegroom out of his chamber, while His perishable type decays. The stars which surround it will be replaced by Saints and Angels circling His throne. Above and below, the clouds of the air, the trees of the field, the waters of the great deep will be found impregnated with the forms of everlasting spirits, the servants of God which do His pleasure. And our own mortal bodies will then be found in like manner to contain within them an inner man, which will then receive its due proportions, as the soul's harmonious organ, instead of that gross mass of flesh and blood which sight and touch are sensible of. For this glorious manifestation the whole creation is at present in travail, earnestly desiring that it may be accomplished in its season.

These are thoughts to make us eagerly and devoutly say, "Come, Lord Jesus, to end the time of waiting, of darkness, of turbulence, of disputing, of sorrow, of care." These are thoughts to lead us to rejoice in every day and hour that passes, as bringing us nearer the time of His appearing, and the termination of sin and misery. They are thoughts which ought thus to affect us; and so they would, were it not for the load of guilt which weighs upon us, for sins committed against light and grace. O that it were otherwise with us! O that we were fitted

duly to receive this lesson which the world gives us, and had so improved the gifts of life, that while we felt it to be perishing, we might rejoice in it as precious! O that we were not conscious of deep stains upon our souls, the accumulations of past years, and of infirmities continually besetting us! Were it not for all this,—were it not for our unprepared state, as in one sense it may truly be called, how gladly should we hail each new month and year as a token that our Saviour is so much nearer to us than He ever has been yet! May He grant His grace abundantly to us, to make us meet for His presence, that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming! May He vouchsafe to us the full grace of His ordinances: may He feed us with His choicest gifts: may He expel the poison from our souls: may He wash us clean in His precious blood, and give us the fulness of faith, love, and hope, as foretastes of the heavenly portion which He destines for us!

SERMON XV.

Moral Effects of Communion with God.

"*One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple.*"—PSALM xxvii. 4.

WHAT the Psalmist desired, we Christians enjoy to the full,—the liberty of holding communion with God in His Temple all through our life. Under the Law, the presence of God was but in one place; and therefore could be approached and enjoyed only at set times. For far the greater part of their lives, the chosen people were in one sense "cast out of the sight of His eyes;"[1] and the periodical return to it which they were allowed, was a privilege highly coveted and earnestly expected. Much more precious was the privilege of continually dwelling in His sight, which is spoken of in the text. "One thing," says the Psalmist, "have I desired of the Lord that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple." He desired to have continually that communion with God in prayer, praise, and meditation, to which His presence

[1] Psalm xxxi. 24.

admits the soul; and this, I say, is the portion of Christians. Faith opens upon us Christians the Temple of God wherever we are; for that Temple is a spiritual one, and so is everywhere present. "We have access," says the Apostle,—that is, we have admission or introduction, "by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And hence he says elsewhere, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice." "Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing; in every thing give thanks." And St. James, "Is any afflicted? let him pray: is any merry? let him sing Psalms."[2] Prayer, praise, thanksgiving, contemplation, are the peculiar privilege and duty of a Christian, and that for their own sakes, from the exceeding comfort and satisfaction they afford him, and without reference to any definite results to which prayer tends, without reference to the answers which are promised to it, from a general sense of the blessedness of being under the shadow of God's throne.

I propose, then, in what follows, to make some remarks on communion with God, or prayer in a large sense of the word; not as regards its external consequences, but as it may be considered to affect our own minds and hearts.

What, then, is prayer? It is (if it may be said reverently) *conversing* with God. We converse with our fellow-men, and then we use familiar language, because they *are* our fellows. We converse with God, and then we use the lowliest, awfullest, calmest, concisest language we can, because He *is* God. Prayer, then, is *divine* con-

[2] Rom. v. 2. Phil. iv. 4. 1 Thess. v. 16–18. James v. 13.

verse, differing from human as God differs from man. Thus St. Paul says, "Our conversation is in heaven,"[3]— not indeed thereby meaning converse of words only, but intercourse and manner of living generally; yet still in an especial way converse of words or prayer, because language is the special means of all intercourse. Our intercourse with our fellow-men goes on, not by sight, but by sound, not by eyes, but by ears. Hearing is the social sense, and language is the social bond. In like manner, as the Christian's conversation is in heaven, as it is his duty, with Enoch and other Saints, *to walk with God*, so his voice is in heaven, his heart "inditing of a good matter," of prayers and praises. Prayers and praises are the mode of his intercourse with the next world, as the converse of business or recreation is the mode in which this world is carried on in all its separate courses. He who does not pray, does not claim his citizenship with heaven, but lives, though an heir of the kingdom as if he were a child of earth.

Now, it is not surprising if that duty or privilege, which is the characteristic token of our heavenly inheritance, should also have an especial influence upon our fitness for claiming it. He who does not use a gift, loses it; the man who does not use his voice or limbs, loses power over them, and becomes disqualified for the state of life to which he is called. In like manner, he who neglects to pray, not only suspends the enjoyment, but is in a way to lose the possession, of his divine citizenship. We are members of another world; we have been severed from the companionship of devils, and brought

[3] Phil. iii. 20.

into that invisible kingdom of Christ which faith alone discerns,—that mysterious Presence of God which encompasses us, which is in us, and around us, which is in our heart, which enfolds us as though with a robe of light, hiding our scarred and discoloured souls from the sight of Divine Purity, and making them shining as the Angels; and which flows in upon us too by means of all forms of beauty and grace which this visible world contains, in a starry host or (if I may so say) a milky way of divine companions, the inhabitants of Mount Zion, where we dwell. Faith, I say, alone apprehends all this; but yet there *is* something which is not left to faith,—our own tastes, likings, motives, and habits. Of these we are conscious in our degree, and we can make ourselves more and more conscious; and as consciousness tells us what they are, reason tells us whether they are such as become, as correspond with, that heavenly world into which we have been translated.

I say then, it is plain to common sense that the man who has not accustomed himself to the language of heaven will be no fit inhabitant of it when, in the Last Day, it is perceptibly revealed. The case is like that of a language or style of speaking of this world; we know well a foreigner from a native. Again, we know those who have been used to kings' courts or educated society from others. By their voice, accent, and language, and not only so, by their gestures and gait, by their usages, by their mode of conducting themselves and their principles of conduct, we know well what a vast difference there is between those who have lived in good society and those who have not. What indeed is called "*good*

society" is often very worthless society. I am not speaking of it to praise it; I only mean, that, as the manners which men call refined or courtly are gained only by intercourse with courts and polished circles, and as the influence of the words there used (that is, of the ideas which those words, striking again and again on the ear, convey to the mind), extends in a most subtle way over all that men do, over the turn of their sentences, and the tone of their questions and replies, and their general bearing, and the spontaneous flow of their thoughts, and their mode of viewing things, and the general maxims or heads to which they refer them, and the motives which determine them, and their likings and dislikings, hopes and fears, and their relative estimate of persons, and the intensity of their perceptions towards particular objects; so a habit of prayer, the practice of turning to God and the unseen world, in every season, in every place, in every emergency (let alone its supernatural effect of prevailing with God),—prayer, I say, has what may be called a *natural* effect, in spiritualizing and elevating the soul. A man is no longer what he was before; gradually, imperceptibly to himself, he has imbibed a new set of ideas, and become imbued with fresh principles. He is as one coming from kings' courts, with a grace, a delicacy, a dignity, a propriety, a justness of thought and taste, a clearness and firmness of principle, all his own. Such is the power of God's secret grace acting through those ordinances which He has enjoined us; such the evident fitness of those ordinances to produce the results which they set before us. As speech is the organ of human society, and the means of human civilization, so

is prayer the instrument of divine fellowship and divine training.

I will give, for the sake of illustration, some instances in detail of one particular fault of mind, which among others a habit of prayer is calculated to cure.

For instance; many a man seems to have no grasp at all of doctrinal truth. He cannot get himself to think it of importance what a man believes, and what not. He tries to do so; for a time he does; he does for a time think that a certain faith is necessary for salvation, that certain doctrines are to be put forth and maintained in charity to the souls of men. Yet though he thinks so one day, he changes the next; he holds the truth, and then lets it go again. He is filled with doubts; suddenly the question crosses him, "Is it possible that such and such a doctrine *is* necessary?" and he relapses into an uncomfortable sceptical state, out of which there is no outlet. Reasonings do not convince him; he *cannot* be convinced; he has no grasp of truth. Why? Because the next world is not a reality to him; it only exists in his mind in the form of certain conclusions from certain reasonings. It is but an inference; and never can be more, never can be present to his mind, until he acts, instead of arguing. Let him but act as if the next world were before him; let him but give himself to such devotional exercises as we ought to observe in the presence of an Almighty, All-holy, and All-merciful God, and it will be a rare case indeed if his difficulties do not vanish.

Or again: a man may have a natural disposition towards caprice and change; he may be apt to take up

first one fancy, then another, from novelty or other reason; he may take sudden likings or dislikings, or be tempted to form a scheme of religion for himself, of what he thinks best or most beautiful out of all the systems which divide the world.

Again: he is troubled perhaps with a variety of unbecoming thoughts, which he would fain keep out of his mind if he could. He finds himself unsettled and uneasy, dissatisfied with his condition, easily excited, sorry at sin one moment, forgetting it the next, feeble-minded, unable to rule himself, tempted to dote upon trifles, apt to be caught and influenced by vanities, and to abandon himself to languor or indolence.

Once more: he has not a clear perception of the path of truth and duty. This is an especial fault among us now-a-days: men are actuated perhaps by the best feelings and the most amiable motives, and are not fairly chargeable with insincerity; and yet there is a want of straightforwardness in their conduct. They allow themselves to be guided by expediency, and defend themselves, and perhaps so plausibly, that though you are not convinced, you are silenced. They attend to what others think, more than to what God says; they look at Scripture more as a gift to man than as a gift from God; they consider themselves at liberty to modify its plain precepts by a certain discretionary rule; they listen to the voice of great men, and allow themselves to be swayed by them; they make comparisons and strike the balance between the impracticability of the whole that God commands, and the practicability of effecting a part, and think they may consent to give up something,

if they can secure the rest. They shift about in opinion, going first a little this way, then a little that, according to the loudness and positiveness with which others speak; they are at the mercy of the last speaker, and they think they observe a safe, judicious, and middle course, by always keeping a certain distance behind those who go furthest. Or they are rash in their religious projects and undertakings, and forget that they may be violating the lines and fences of God's law, while they move about freely at their pleasure. Now, I will not judge another; I will not say that in this or that given case the fault of mind in question (for any how it is a fault), does certainly arise from some certain cause which I choose to guess at: but at least there *are* cases where this wavering of mind *does* arise from scantiness of prayer; and if so, it is worth a man's considering, who is thus unsteady, timid, and dimsighted, whether this scantiness be not perchance the true reason of such infirmities in his own case, and whether a "continuing instant in prayer,"—by which I mean, not merely prayer morning and evening, but some thing suitable to his disease, something extraordinary, as medicine is extraordinary, a "redeeming of time" from society and recreation in order to pray more,—whether such a change in his habits would not remove them?

For what is the very promise of the New Covenant but stability? what is it, but a clear insight into the truth, such as will enable us to know how to walk, how to profess, how to meet the circumstances of life, how to withstand gainsayers? Are we built upon a rock or upon the sand? are we after all tossed about on the sea of opinion, when Christ has stretched out His hand to

us, to help and encourage us? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."[4] Such is the word of promise. Can we possibly have apprehensions about what man will do to us or say of us, can we flatter the great ones of earth, or timidly yield to the many, or be dazzled by talent, or drawn aside by interest, who are in the habit of divine conversations? "Ye have an unction from the Holy One," says St. John, "and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."[5] This is that birth, by which the baptized soul not only enters, but actually embraces and realizes the kingdom of God. This is the true and effectual regeneration, when the seed of life takes root in man and thrives. Such men have accustomed themselves to speak to God, and God has ever spoken to them; and they feel "the powers of the world to come" as truly as they feel the presence of this world, because they have been accustomed to speak and act as if it were real. All of us must rely on something; all must look up to, admire, court, make themselves one with something. Most men cast in their lot with the visible world; but true Christians with Saints and Angels.

Such men are little understood by the world because they are not of the world; and hence it sometimes happens

[4] Is. xxvi. 3. [5] 1 John ii. 20, 21, 27; iii. 9.

that even the better sort of men are often disconcerted and vexed by them. It cannot be otherwise; they move forward on principles so different from what are commonly assumed as true. They take for granted, as first principles, what the world wishes to have proved in detail. They have become familiar with the sights of the next world, till they talk of them as if all men admitted them. The immortality of truth, its oneness, the impossibility of falsehood coalescing with it, what truth is, what it should lead one to do in particular cases, how it lies in the details of life,—all these points are mere matters of debate in the world, and men go through long processes of argument, and pride themselves on their subtleness in defending or attacking, in making probable or improbable, ideas which are assumed without a word by those who have lived in heaven, as the very ground to start from. In consequence, such men are called bad disputants, in consecutive reasoners, strange, eccentric, or perverse thinkers, merely because they do not take for granted, nor go to prove, what others do,—because they do not go about to define and determine the sights (as it were), the mountains and rivers and plains, and sun, moon, and stars, of the next world. And hence in turn they are commonly unable to enter into the ways of thought or feelings of other men, having been engrossed with God's thoughts and God's ways. Hence, perhaps, they seem abrupt in what they say and do; nay, even make others feel constrained and uneasy in their presence. Perhaps they appear reserved too, because they take so much for granted which might be drawn out, and because they cannot bring themselves to tell all their thoughts from

their sacredness, and because they are drawn off from free conversation to the thought of heaven, on which their minds rest. Nay, perchance, they appear severe, because their motives are not understood, nor their sensitive jealousy for the honour of God and their charitable concern for the good of their fellow-Christians duly appreciated. In short, to the world they seem like *foreigners*. We know how foreigners strike us; they are often to *our* notions strange and unpleasing in their manners; why is this? merely *because* they are of a different country. Each country has its own manners,—one may not be better than other; but we naturally like our own ways, and we do not understand other. We do not see their meaning. We misconstrue them; we think they mean something unpleasant, something rude, or over-free, or haughty, or unrefined, when they do not. And in like manner, the world at large, not only is not Christian, but cannot discern or understand the Christian. Thus our Blessed Lord Himself was not recognized or honoured by His relatives, and (as is plain to every reader of Scripture) He often seems to speak abruptly and severely. So too St. Paul was considered by the Corinthians as contemptible in speech. And hence St. John, speaking of "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God," adds, "therefore the world *knoweth* us not, because it knew Him not."[6] Such is the effect of divine meditations: admitting us into the next world, and withdrawing us from this; making us children of God, but withal "strangers unto our brethren, even aliens unto our

[6] 1 John iii. 1.

mother's children."[7] Yea, though the true servants of God increase in meekness and love day by day, and to those who know them will seem what they really are; and though their good works are evident to all men, and cannot be denied, yet such is the eternal law which goes between the Church and the world—we cannot be friends of both; and they who take their portion with the Church, will seem, except in some remarkable cases, unamiable to the world, for the "world knoweth them not," and does not like them though it can hardly tell why; yet (as St. John proceeds) they have this blessing, that "when He shall appear, they shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is."[8]

And if, as it would seem, we must choose between the two, surely the world's friendship may be better parted with than our fellowship with our Lord and Saviour. What indeed have we to do with courting men, whose faces are turned towards God? We know how men feel and act when they come to die; they discharge their worldly affairs from their minds, and try to realize the unseen state. Then this world is nothing to them. It may praise, it may blame; but they feel it not. They are leaving their goods, their deeds, their sayings, their writings, their names, behind them; and they care not for it, for they wait for Christ. To one thing alone they are alive, His coming; they watch against it, if so be they may then be found without shame. Such is the conduct of dying men; and what all but the very hardened do at the last, if their senses fail not and their powers hold, that does the true Christian all life long.

[7] Ps. lxix. 8. [8] 1 John iii. 2.

He is ever dying while he lives; he is on his bier, and the prayers for the sick are saying over him. He has no work but that of making his peace with God, and preparing for the judgment. He has no aim but that of being found worthy to escape the things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of man. And therefore day by day he unlearns the love of this world, and the desire of its praise; he can bear to belong to the nameless family of God, and to seem to the world strange in it and out of place, for so he is.

And when Christ comes at last, blessed indeed will be his lot. He has joined himself from the first to the conquering side; he has risked the present against the future, preferring the chance of eternity to the certainty of time; and then his reward will be but beginning, when that of the children of this world is come to an end. In the words of the wise man, "Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of His salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This is he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach; we fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!"[9]

[9] Wisd. v. 1–5.

SERMON XVI.

Christ Hidden from the World.

"*The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*
—JOHN i. 5.

OF all the thoughts which rise in the mind when contemplating the sojourn of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth,[1] none perhaps is more affecting and subduing than the obscurity which attended it. I do not mean His obscure condition, in the sense of its being humble; but the obscurity in which He was shrouded, and the secrecy which He observed. This characteristic of His first Advent is referred to very frequently in Scripture, as in the text, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not;" and is in contrast with what is foretold about His second Advent. Then "every eye shall see Him;" which implies that all shall recognize Him; whereas, when He came for the first time, though many saw Him, few indeed discerned Him. It had been prophesied, "When we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him;" and at the very end of His ministry, He said to one of

[1] Preached on Christmas Day.

His twelve chosen friends, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"[2]

I propose to set before you one or two thoughts which arise from this very solemn circumstance, and which may, through God's blessing, be profitable.

1. And first, let us review some of the circumstances which marked His sojourn when on earth.

His condescension in coming down from heaven, in leaving His Father's glory and taking flesh, is so far beyond power of words or thought, that one might consider at first sight that it mattered little whether He came as a prince or a beggar. And yet after all, it *is* much more wonderful that He came in low estate, for this reason; because it might have been thought beforehand, that, though He condescended to come on earth, yet He would not submit to be overlooked and despised: now the rich are not despised by the world, and the poor are. If He had come as a great prince or noble, the world without knowing a whit more that He was God, yet would at least have looked up to Him and honoured Him, as being a prince; but when He came in a low estate, He took upon Him one additional humiliation, *contempt*,—being contemned, scorned, rudely passed by, roughly profaned by His creatures.

What were the actual circumstances of His coming? His Mother is a poor woman; she comes to Bethlehem to be taxed, travelling, when her choice would have been to remain at home. She finds there is no room in the inn; she is obliged to betake herself to a stable; she brings forth her firstborn Son, and lays Him in a man-

[2] Isai. liii. 2. John xiv. 9.

ger. That little babe, so born, so placed, is none other than the Creator of heaven and earth, the Eternal Son of God.

Well; he was born of a poor woman, laid in a manger, brought up to a lowly trade, that of a carpenter; and when He began to preach the Gospel He had not a place to lay His head: lastly, He was put to death, to an infamous and odious death, the death which criminals then suffered.

For the three last years of His life, He preached the Gospel, I say, as we read in Scripture; but He did not begin to do so till He was thirty years old. For the first thirty years of His life, He seems to have lived, just as a poor man would live now. Day after day, season after season, winter and summer, one year and then another, passed on, as might happen to any of us. He passed from being a babe in arms to being a child, and then He became a boy, and so He grew up "like a tender plant," increasing in wisdom and stature; and then He seems to have followed the trade of Joseph, his reputed father; going on in an ordinary way without any great occurrence, till He was thirty years old. How very wonderful is all this! that He should live here, doing nothing great, so long; living here, as if for the sake of living; not preaching, or collecting disciples, or apparently in any way furthering the cause which brought Him down from heaven. Doubtless there were deep and wise reasons in God's counsels for His going on so long in obscurity; I only mean, that *we* do not know them.

And it is remarkable that those who were about Him, seem to have treated Him as one of their equals. His

brethren, that is, His near relations, His cousins, did not believe in Him. And it is very observable, too, that when He began to preach and a multitude collected, we are told, "When His friends heard of it they went out to lay hold on Him; for they said, He is beside Himself."[3] They treated Him as we might be disposed, and rightly, to treat any ordinary person now, who began to preach in the streets. I say "rightly," because such persons generally preach a *new* Gospel, and therefore must be wrong. Also, they preach without being sent, and against authority; all which is wrong too. Accordingly we are often tempted to say that such people are "beside themselves," or mad, and not unjustly. It is often charitable to say so, for it is better to be mad than to be disobedient. Well, what we should say of such persons, this is what our Lord's friends said of Him. They had lived so long with Him, and yet did not know Him; did not understand what He was. They saw nothing to mark a difference between Him and them. He was dressed as others, He ate and drank as others, He came in and went out, and spoke, and walked, and slept, as others. He was in all respects a man, except that He did not sin; and this great difference the many would not detect, because none of us understands those who are much better than himself: so that Christ, the sinless Son of God, might be living close to us, and we not discover it.

2. I say that Christ, the sinless Son of God, might be living now in the world as our next door neighbour, and perhaps we not find it out. And this is a thought that

[3] Mark iii. 21.

should be dwelt on. I do not mean to say that there are not a number of persons, who we could be sure were not Christ; of course, no persons who lead bad and irreligious lives. But there are a number of persons who are in no sense irreligious or open to serious blame, who are very much like each other at first sight, yet in God's eyes are very different. I mean the great mass of what are called respectable men, who vary very much: some are merely decent and outwardly correct persons, and have no great sense of religion, do not deny themselves, have no ardent love of God, but love the world; and, whereas their interest lies in being regular and orderly, or they have no strong passions, or have early got into the way of being regular, and their habits are formed accordingly, they are what they are, decent and correct, but very little more. But there are others who look just the same to the world, who in their hearts are very different; they make no great show, they go on in the same quiet ordinary way as the others, but really they are training to be saints in Heaven. They do all they can to change themselves, to become like God, to obey God, to discipline themselves, to renounce the world; but they do it in secret, both because God tells them so to do, and because they do not like it to be known. Moreover, there are a number of others between these two with more or less of worldliness and more or less of faith. Yet they all look about the same, to common eyes, because true religion is a hidden life in the heart; and though it cannot exist without deeds, yet these are for the most part secret deeds, secret charities, secret prayers, secret self-denials, secret struggles, secret victories.

Of course in proportion as persons are brought out into public life, they will be seen and scrutinized, and (in a certain sense) known more; but I am talking of the ordinary condition of people in private life, such as our Saviour was for thirty years; and these look very like each other And there are so many of them, that unless we get very near them, we cannot see any distinction between one and another; we have no means to do so, and it is no business of ours. And yet, though we have no right to judge others, but must leave this to God, it is very certain that a really holy man, a true saint, though he looks like other men, still has a sort of secret power in him to attract others to him who are like-minded, and to influence all who have any thing in them like him. And thus it often becomes a test, whether we are like-minded with the Saints of God, whether they have influence over us. And though we have seldom means of knowing at the time who are God's own Saints, yet after all is over we have; and then on looking back on what is past, perhaps after they are dead and gone, if we knew them, we may ask ourselves what power they had over us, whether they attracted us, influenced us, humbled us, whether they made our hearts burn within us. Alas! too often we shall find that we were close to them for a long time, had means of knowing them, and knew them not; and that is a heavy condemnation on us, indeed. Now this was singularly exemplified in our Saviour's history, by how much He was so very holy. The holier a man is, the less he is understood by men of the world. All who have any spark of living faith will understand him in a measure, and the holier he is, they will, for the

most part, be attracted the more; but those who serve the world will be blind to him, or scorn and dislike him, the holier he is. This, I say, happened to our Lord. He was All-holy, but "the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." His near relations did not believe in Him. And if this was really so, and for the reason I have said, it surely becomes a question whether we should have understood Him better than they: whether though He had been our next door neighbour, or one of our family, we should have distinguished Him from any one else, who was correct and quiet in his deportment; or rather, whether we should not, though we respected Him, (alas, what a word! what language towards the Most High God!) yet even if we went as far as this, whether we should not have thought Him strange, eccentric, extravagant, and fanciful. Much less should we have detected any sparks of that glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and which was merely hidden not quenched by His earthly tabernacle. This, truly, is a very awful thought; because if He were near us for any long time, and we did not see any thing wonderful in Him, we might take it as a clear proof that we were not His, for "His sheep know His voice, and follow Him;" we might take it as a clear proof that we should not know Him, or admire His greatness, or adore His glory, or love His excellency, if we were admitted to His presence in heaven.

3. And here we are brought to another most serious thought, which I will touch upon. We are very apt to wish we had been born in the days of Christ, and in this way we excuse our misconduct, when conscience re-

proaches us. We say, that had we had the advantage of being with Christ, we should have had stronger motives, stronger restraints against sin. I answer, that so far from our sinful habits being reformed by the presence of Christ, the chance is, that those same habits would have hindered us from recognizing Him. We should not have known He was present; and if He had even told us who He was, we should not have believed Him. Nay, had we seen His miracles (incredible as it may seem), even they would not have made any lasting impression on us. Without going into this subject, consider only the possibility of Christ being close to us, even though He did no miracle, and our not knowing it; yet I believe this literally would have been the case with most men. But enough on this subject. What I am coming to is this: I wish you to observe what a fearful light this casts upon our prospects in the next world. We think heaven must be a place of happiness to us, if we do but get there; but the great probability is, if we can judge by what goes on here below, that a bad man, if brought to heaven, would not know he was in heaven;—I do not go to the further question, whether, on the contrary, the very fact of his being in heaven with all his unholiness upon him, would not be a literal torment to him, and light up the fires of hell within him. This indeed would be a most dreadful way of finding out where he was. But let us suppose the lighter case: let us suppose he could remain in heaven unblasted, yet it would seem that at least he would not know that he was there. He would see nothing wonderful there. Could men come nearer to God than when they seized Him, struck Him,

spit on Him, hurried Him along, stripped Him, stretched out His limbs upon the cross, nailed Him to it, raised it up, stood gazing on Him, jeered Him, gave Him vinegar, looked close whether He was dead, and then pierced Him with a spear? O dreadful thought, that the nearest approaches man has made to God upon earth have been in blasphemy! Whether of the two came closer to Him, St. Thomas, who was allowed to reach forth his hand and reverently touch His wounds, and St. John, who rested on His bosom, or the brutal soldiers who profaned Him limb by limb, and tortured Him nerve by nerve? His Blessed Mother, indeed, came closer still to Him; and we, if we be true believers, still closer, who have Him really, though spiritually, within us; but this is another, an inward sort of approach. Of those who approached Him externally, they came nearest, who knew nothing about it. So it is with sinners: they would walk close to the throne of God; they would stupidly gaze at it; they would touch it; they would meddle with the holiest things; they would go on intruding and prying, not meaning any thing wrong by it, but with a sort of brute curiosity, till the avenging lightnings destroyed them;—all because they have no *senses* to guide them in the matter. Our bodily senses tell us of the approach of good or evil on earth. By sound, by scent, by feeling we know what is happening to us. We know when we are exposing ourselves to the weather, when we are exerting ourselves too much. We have warnings, and feel we must not neglect them. Now, sinners have no spiritual senses; they can presage nothing; they do not know what is going to happen the next mo-

ment to them. So they go fearlessly further and further among precipices, till on a sudden they fall, or are smitten and perish. Miserable beings! and this is what sin does for immortal souls; that they should be like the cattle which are slaughtered at the shambles, yet touch and smell the very weapons which are to destroy them!

4. But you may say, how does this concern us? Christ is not here; *we* cannot thus or in any less way insult His Majesty. Are we so sure of this? Certainly we cannot commit such open blasphemy; but it is another matter whether we cannot commit as great. For often sins are greater which are less startling; insults more bitter, which are not so loud; and evils deeper, which are more subtle. Do we not recollect a very awful passage? "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him."[4] Now, I am not deciding whether or no this denunciation can be fulfilled in the case of Christians now, though when we recollect that we *are* at present under the ministration of that very Spirit of whom our Saviour speaks, this is a very serious question; but I quote it to show that there may be sins greater even than insult and injury offered to Christ's Person, though we should think that impossible, and though they could not be so flagrant or open. With this thought let it be considered:—

First, that Christ is still on earth. He said expressly that He would come again. The Holy Ghost's coming is so really His coming, that we might as well say that

[4] Matt. xii. 32.

He was not here in the days of His flesh, when He was visibly in this world, as deny that He is here now, when He is here by His Divine Spirit. This indeed is a mystery, how God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, two Persons, can be one, how He can be in the Spirit and the Spirit in Him; but so it is.

Next, if He is still on earth, yet is not visible (which cannot be denied), it is plain that He keeps Himself still in the condition which He chose in the days of His flesh. I mean, He is a hidden Saviour, and may be approached (unless we are careful) without due reverence and fear. I say, wherever He is (for that is a further question), still He is here, and again He is secret; and whatever be the tokens of His Presence, still they must be of a nature to admit of persons doubting where it is; and if they will argue, and be sharpwitted and subtle, they may perplex themselves and others, as the Jews did even in the days of His flesh, till He seems to them nowhere present on earth now. And when they come to think Him far away, of course they *feel* it to be impossible so to insult Him as the Jews did of old; and if nevertheless He *is* here, they *are* perchance approaching and insulting Him, though they so feel. And this was just the case of the Jews, for they too were ignorant what they were doing. It is probable, then, that we can now commit at least as great blasphemy towards Him as the Jews did first, because we are under the dispensation of that Holy Spirit, against whom even more heinous sins *can* be committed; next, because His presence now as little witnesses of itself, or is impressive to the many, as His bodily presence formerly.

We see a further reason for this apprehension, when we consider what the tokens of His presence now are; for they will be found to be of a nature easily to lead men into irreverence, unless they be humble and watchful. For instance, the Church is called "His Body:" what His material Body was when He was visible on earth, such is the Church now. It is the instrument of His Divine power; it is that which we must approach, to gain good from Him; it is that which by insulting we awaken His anger. Now, what is the Church but, as it were, a body of humiliation, almost provoking insult and profaneness, when men do not live by faith? an earthen vessel, far more so even than His body of flesh, for that was at least pure from all sin, and the Church is defiled in all her members. We know that her ministers at best are but imperfect and erring, and of like passions with their brethren; yet of them He has said, speaking not to the Apostles merely but to all the seventy disciples (to whom Christian ministers are in office surely equal), "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and He that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me."

Again: He has made the poor, weak, and afflicted, tokens and instruments of His Presence; and here again, as is plain, the same temptation meets us to neglect or profane it. What He was, such are His chosen followers in this world; and as His obscure and defenceless state led men to insult and ill-treat Him, so the like peculiarities, in the tokens of His Presence, lead men to insult Him now. That such are His tokens is plain from many passages of Scripture: for instance, He says of children,

"Whoso shall receive one such little child in My Name, receiveth Me." Again: He said to Saul, who was persecuting His followers, "Why persecutest thou Me?" And He forewarns us, that at the Last Day He will say to the righteous, "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." And He adds, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."[5] He observes the same connexion between Himself and His followers in His words to the wicked. What makes this passage the more awful and apposite, is this, which has been before now remarked,[6] that neither righteous nor wicked *knew* what they had done; even the righteous are represented as unaware that they had approached Christ. They say, "Lord, *when* saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee, or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?" In every age, then, Christ is both in the world, and yet not publicly so more than in the days of His flesh.

And a similar remark applies to His Ordinances, which are at once most simple, yet most intimately connected with Him. St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, shows both how easy and how fearful it is to profane the Lord's Supper, while he states how great the excess of the Corinthians had been, yet also that it was a want of "*discerning* the Lord's Body. When He was born into the world, the world knew it not. He was laid in a rude manger, among the cattle, but 'all

[5] Matt. xviii. 5. Acts ix. 4. Matt. xxv. 35–40.
[6] *Vide* Pascal's Thoughts.

the Angels of God worshipped Him." Now too He is present upon a table, homely perhaps in make, and dishonoured in its circumstances; and faith adores, but the world passes by.

Let us then pray Him ever to enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may belong to the Heavenly Host, not to this world. As the carnal-minded would not perceive Him even in Heaven, so the spiritual heart may approach Him, possess Him, see Him, even upon earth.

SERMON XVII.

Christ Manifested in Remembrance.

"*He shall glorify Me.*"—JOHN xvi. 14.

WHEN our Lord was leaving His Apostles, and they were sorrowful, He consoled them by the promise of another Guide and Teacher, on whom they might rely instead of Him, and who should be more to them even than He had been. He promised them the Third Person in the Ever-blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Himself and of His Father, who should come invisibly, and with the greater power and comfort, inasmuch as He was invisible; so that His presence would be more real and efficacious by how much it was more secret and inscrutable. At the same time this new and most gracious Comforter, while bringing a higher blessedness, would not in any degree obscure or hide what had gone before. Though He did more for the Apostles than Christ had done, He would not throw into the shade and supersede Him whom He succeeded. How could that be? who could come greater or holier than the Son of God? who could obscure the Lord of glory? how could the Holy Ghost, who was one with the Son, and

the Spirit proceeding from the Son, do otherwise than manifest the Son, while manifesting Himself? how could He fail to illuminate the mercies and perfections of Him, whose death upon the Cross opened a way for Himself, the Holy Ghost, to be gracious to man also? Accordingly, though it was expedient that the Son should go away, in order that the Comforter might come, we did not lose the sight of the Son in the presence of the Comforter. On the contrary, Christ expressly announced to the Apostles concerning Him, in the words of the text, "He shall glorify Me."

Now these words lead us first to consider in what special way the Holy Ghost gives glory to the Son of God; and next to inquire whether there is not in this appointment some trace of a general law of Divine Providence, which is observed, as in Scripture, so in the world's affairs.

The special way in which God the Holy Ghost gave glory to God the Son, seems to have been His revealing Him as the Only-begotten Son of the Father, who had appeared as the Son of man. Our Saviour said most plainly, that He was the Son of God; but it is one thing to declare the whole truth, another to receive it. Our Saviour said all that need be said, but His Apostles understood Him not. Nay, when they made confession, and that in faith, and by the secret grace of God, and therefore acceptably to Christ, still they understood not fully what they said. St. Peter acknowledged Him as the Christ, the Son of God. So did the centurion who was present at His crucifixion. Did that centurion, when he said, "Truly, this was the Son of God," understand his own words?

Surely not. Nor did St. Peter, though he spoke, not through flesh and blood, but by the revelation of the Father. Had he understood, could he so soon after, when our Lord spoke of His passion which lay before Him, have presumed to "take Him, and begin to rebuke Him?" Certainly he did not understand that our Lord, as being the Son of God, was not the creature of God, but the Eternal Word, the Only-begotten Son of the Father, one with Him in substance, distinct in Person.

And when we look into our Saviour's conduct in the days of His flesh, we find that He purposely concealed that knowledge, which yet He gave; as if intending it should be enjoyed, but not at once; as if His words were to stand, but to wait awhile for their interpretation; as if reserving them for His coming, who at once was to bring Christ and His words into the light. Thus when the young ruler came to Him, and said, "Good Master," He showed Himself more desirous of correcting him than of revealing Himself, desirous rather to make him weigh his words, than Himself to accept them. At another time, when He had so far disclosed Himself that the Jews accused Him of blasphemy, in that He, being a man, made Himself God, far from repeating and insisting on the sacred Truth which they rejected, He invalidated the terms in which He had conveyed it, by intimating that even the prophets of the Old Testament were called gods as well as He. And when He stood before Pilate, He refused to bear witness to Himself, or say what He was, or whence He came.

Thus He was among them "as he that serveth." Apparently, it was not till after His resurrection, and

especially after His ascension, when the Holy Ghost descended, that the Apostles understood who had been with them. When all was over they knew it, not at the time.

Now here we see, I think, the trace of a general principle, which comes before us again and again both in Scripture and in the world, that God's presence is not discerned at the time when it is upon us, but afterwards, when we look back upon what is gone and over.

Our Saviour's history itself will supply instances in evidence of the existence of this remarkable law.

St. Philip, for instance, when he asked to see the Almighty Father, little understood the privilege he had already so long enjoyed; accordingly, our Lord answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"

Again, on another occasion, He said to St. Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."[1] Again, "These things understood not His disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him."[2]

And in like manner while He talked with the two disciples going to Emmaus, their eyes were holden that they did not know Him. When they recognized Him, at once He vanished out of their sight. *Then* "they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?"[3]

Such too are the following, taken from the Old Testament. Jacob, when he fled from his brother, "lighted

[1] John xiii. 7. [2] John xii. 16. [3] Luke xxiv. 32.

upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set." In his sleep he saw the vision of Angels, and the Lord above them. Accordingly when he awaked out of his sleep, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."[4]

Again, after wrestling all night with the Angel, not knowing who it was, and asking after His name, then at length "Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."[5]

So again, after the Angel had departed from Gideon, who had treated Him like a man, then, and not till then, he discovered who had been with him, and he said, "Alas, O Lord God; for because I have seen an Angel of the Lord face to face."[6]

And so in like manner, after the Angel had departed from Manoah and his wife, then, and not till then, they discovered Him. Then "they fell on their faces to the ground. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God."[7]

Such is God's rule in Scripture, to dispense His blessings, silently and secretly; so that we do not discern them at the time, except by faith, afterwards only. Of which, as I have said, we have two special instances in the very outline of the Gospel history; the mission of our Saviour, who was not understood till afterwards to be the Son of God Most High, and the mission of the Holy Ghost, which was still more laden with spiritual

[4] Gen. xxviii. 11-17. [5] Gen. xxxii. 30. [6] Judges vi. 22. [7] Ib. xiii. 20, 22.

benefits, and is still more secret. Flesh and blood could not discern the Son of God, even when He wrought visible miracles; the natural man still less discerns the things of the Spirit of God; yet in the next world all shall be condemned, for not believing here what it was never given them to see. Thus the presence of God is like His glory as it appeared to Moses; He said, "Thou canst not see my face and live;" but He passed by, and Moses saw that glory, as it retired, which he might not see in front, or in passing; he saw it, and he acknowledged it, and "made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."[8]

Now consider how parallel this is to what takes place in the providences of daily life. Events happen to us pleasant or painful; we do not know at the time the meaning of them, we do not see God's hand in them. If indeed we have faith, we confess what we do not see, and take all that happens as His; but whether we will accept it in faith or not, certainly there is no other way of accepting it. We see nothing. We see not why things come, or whither they tend. Jacob cried out on one occasion, "All these things are against me;"[9] certainly so they seemed to be. One son made away with by the rest, another in prison in a foreign land, a third demanded;—"Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Yet all these things were working for good. Or pursue the fortunes of the favourite and holy youth who was the first taken from him; sold by his brethren to strangers,

[8] Exod. xxxiii. 20; xxxiv. 8. [9] Gen. xlii. 36.

carried into Egypt, tempted by a very perilous temptation, overcoming it but not rewarded, thrown into prison, the iron entering into his soul, waiting there till the Lord should be gracious, and "look down from heaven;" but waiting—why? and how long? It is said again and again in the sacred narrative, "The Lord was with Joseph;" but do you think he saw at the time any tokens of God? any tokens, except so far as by faith he realized them, in faith he saw them? His faith was its own reward; which to the eye of reason was no reward at all, for faith forsooth did but judge of things by that standard which it had originally set up, and pronounce that Joseph was happy because he ought to be so. Thus though the Lord was with him, apparently all things were against him. Yet afterwards he saw, what was so mysterious at the time;—"God did send me before you," he said to his brethren, "to preserve life. It was not you that sent me hither, but God; and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

Wonderful providence indeed, which is so silent, yet so efficacious, so constant, so unerring! This is what baffles the power of Satan. He cannot discern the Hand of God in what goes on; and though he would fain meet it and encounter it, in his mad and blasphemous rebellion against heaven, he cannot find it. Crafty and penetrating as he is, yet his thousand eyes and his many instruments avail him nothing against the majestic serene silence, the holy imperturbable calm which reigns through the providences of God. Crafty and experienced as he is, he appears like a child or a fool, like one made

sport of, whose daily bread is but failure and mockery, before the deep and secret wisdom of the Divine Counsels. He makes a guess here, or does a bold act there, but all in the dark. He knew not of Gabriel's coming, and the miraculous conception of the Virgin,[1] or what was meant by that Holy Thing which was to be born, being called the Son of God. He tried to kill Him, and he made martyrs of the innocent children; he tempted the Lord of all with hunger and with ambitious prospects; he sifted the Apostles, and got none but one who already bore his own name, and had been already given over as a devil. He rose against his God in his full strength, in the hour and power of darkness, and then he seemed to conquer; but with his utmost effort, and as his greatest achievement, he did no more than "whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done."[2] He brought into the world the very salvation which he feared and hated. He accomplished the Atonement of that world, whose misery He was plotting. Wonderfully silent, yet resistless course of God's providence! "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour;" and if even devils, sagacious as they are, spirits by nature and experienced in evil, cannot detect His hand, while He works, how can we hope to see it except by that way which the devils cannot take, by a loving faith? how can we see it except afterwards as a reward to our faith, beholding the cloud of glory in the distance, which when present was too rare and impalpable for mortal sense?

And so, again, in a number of other occurrences, not

[1] Vid. Ignat. ad Eph. 19. [2] Acts iv. 28.

striking, not grievous, not pleasant, but ordinary, we are able afterwards to discern that He has been with us, and, like Moses, to worship Him. Let a person who trusts he is on the whole serving God acceptably, look back upon his past life, and he will find how critical were moments and acts, which at the time seemed the most indifferent: as for instance, the school he was sent to as a child, the occasion of his falling in with those persons who have most benefited him, the accidents which determined his calling or prospects whatever they were. God's hand is ever over His own, and He leads them forward by a way they know not of. The utmost they can do is to believe, what they cannot see now, what they shall see hereafter; and as believing, to act together with God towards it.

And hence perchance it is, that years that are past bear in retrospect so much of fragrance with them, though at the time perhaps we saw little in them to take pleasure in; or rather we did not, could not realize that we *were* receiving pleasure, though we received it. We received pleasure, because we were in the presence of God, but we knew it not; we knew not what we received; we did not bring home to ourselves or reflect upon the pleasure we were receiving; but afterwards, when enjoyment is past, reflection comes in. We feel at the time; we recognize and reason afterwards. Such, I say, is the sweetness and softness with which days long passed away fall upon the memory, and strike us. The most ordinary years, when we seemed to be living for nothing, these shine forth to us in their very regularity and orderly course. What was sameness at the time, is now stability;

what was dulness, is now a soothing calm; what seemed unprofitable, has now its treasure in itself; what was but monotony, is now harmony; all is pleasing and comfortable, and we regard it all with affection. Nay, even sorrowful times (which at first sight is wonderful) are thus softened and illuminated afterwards: yet why should they not be so, since then, more than at other times, our Lord is present, when He seems leaving His own to desolateness and orphanhood? The planting of Christ's Cross in the heart is sharp and trying; but the stately tree rears itself aloft, and has fair branches and rich fruit, and is good to look upon. And if all this be true, even of sad or of ordinary times, much more does it hold good of seasons of religious obedience and comfort.

Such are the feelings with which men often look back on their childhood, when any accident brings it vividly before them. Some relic or token of that early time, some spot, or some book, or a word, or a scent, or a sound, brings them back in memory to the first years of their discipleship, and they then see, what they could not know at the time, that God's presence went up with them and gave them rest. Nay, even now perhaps they are unable to discern fully what it was which made that time so bright and glorious. They are full of tender, affectionate thoughts towards those first years, but they do not know why. They think it is those very years which they yearn after, whereas it is the presence of God which, as they now see, was then over them, which attracts them. They think that they regret the past, when they are but longing after the future. It is not that they would be children again, but that they would be Angels

and would see God; they would be immortal beings, crowned with amaranth, robed in white, and with palms in their hands, before His throne.

What happens in the fortunes of individuals, happens also to the Church. Its pleasant times are pleasant in memory. We cannot know who are great and who are little, what times are serious and what are their effects, till afterwards. Then we make much of the abode, and the goings out and the comings in of those who in their day lived familiarly with us, and seemed like other men. Then we gather up the recollection of what they did here, and what they said there. Then their persecutors, however powerful, are not known or spoken of, except by way of setting off *their* achievements and triumphs in the Gospel. "Kings of the earth, and the great men, and rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," who in their day so magnified themselves, so ravaged and deformed the Church, that it could not be seen except by faith, then are found in nowise to have infringed the continuity of its outlines, which shine out clear and glorious, and even more delicate and tender for the very attempt to obliterate them. It needs very little study of history to prove how really this is the case; how little schism and divisions and disorders and troubles and fears and persecutions and scatterings and threatenings interfere with the glory of Christ Mystical, as looked upon afterwards, though at the time they almost hid it. Great Saints, great events, great privileges, like the everlasting mountains, grow as we recede from them.

And it is a sort of instinct, felt by the multitude, that they really are in possession of that which they neither

see nor in faith accept, which (as some have remarked) makes them so unwilling just at the last moment to give up those privileges which they have so long possessed without valuing or using. Sometimes at the last moment, when mercies are about to be withdrawn, when it is too late, or all but too late, a feeling comes over them that something precious is going from them. They seem to hear the sound of arms, and the voices in the Temple saying, "Let us depart hence;" and they attempt to retain what they cannot see;—penitents, when the day of grace is over.

Once more: every one of us surely must have experienced this general feeling most strongly, at one time or other, as regards the Sacraments and Ordinances of the Church. At the time, we cannot realize, we can but believe that Christ is with us; but after an interval a sweetness breathes from them, as from His garments "of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." Such is the memory of many a Holy Communion in Church, of Holy Communions solemnized at a sick-bed, of Baptisms assisted in, of Confirmation, of Marriage, of Ordination; nay, Services which at the time we could not enjoy, from sickness, from agitation, from restlessness,—Services which at the time, in spite of our belief in their blessedness, yet troubled our wayward hearts,—Services which we were tempted to think long, feared beforehand, nay, and wished over when they were performing (alas! that we should be so blind and dead to our highest good), yet afterwards are full of God. We come, like Jacob, in the dark, and lie down with a stone for our pillow; but when we rise again, and call to mind what has passed, we re-

collect we have seen a vision of Angels, and the Lord manifested through them, and we are led to cry out, "How dreadful is this place! This is *none other* than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

To conclude. Let us profit by what every day and hour teaches us, as it flies. What is dark while it is meeting us, reflects the Sun of Righteousness when it is past. Let us profit by this in future, so far as this, to have *faith in what* we cannot see. The world seems to go on as usual. There is nothing of heaven in the face of society; in the news of the day there is nothing of heaven; in the faces of the many, or of the great, or of the rich, or of the busy, there is nothing of heaven; in the words of the eloquent, or the deeds of the powerful, or the counsels of the wise, or the resolves of the lordly, or the pomps of the wealthy, there is nothing of heaven. And yet the Ever-blessed Spirit of God is here; the Presence of the Eternal Son, ten times more glorious, more powerful than when He trod the earth in our flesh, is with us. Let us ever bear in mind this divine truth, —the more secret God's hand is, the more powerful— the more silent, the more awful. We are under the awful ministration of the Spirit, against whom whoso speaks, hazards more than can be reckoned up; whom whoso grieves, loses more of blessing and glory than can be fathomed. The Lord was with Joseph, and the Lord was with David, and the Lord, in the days of His flesh, was with His Apostles; but now, He is with us in the Spirit. And inasmuch as the Divine Spirit is more than flesh and blood; inasmuch as the risen and glorified Saviour is more powerful than when He was in the form

of a servant; inasmuch as the Eternal Word, spiritualizing His own manhood, has more of virtue for us, and grace, and blessing, and life, than when concealed in it, and subject to temptation and pain; inasmuch as faith is more blessed than sight; by so much more are we now more highly privileged, have more title to be called kings and priests unto God, even than the disciples who saw and touched Him. He who glorified Christ, imparts Him thus glorified to us. If He could work miracles in the days of His flesh, how much more can He work miracles now? and if His visible miracles were full of power, how much more His miracles invisible? Let us beg of Him grace wherewith to enter into the depth of our privileges,—to enjoy what we possess,—to believe in, to use, to improve, to glory in our present gifts as "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven."

SERMON XVIII.

The Gainsaying of Korah.

"*Woe unto them; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.*"—JUDE 11.

THERE are two special sins which trouble the Church, and are denounced in Scripture, ambition and avarice, the sin of Korah and the sin of Balaam; both of which are spoken of in the text. The sin of Balaam is denounced again and again by St. Paul, in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus; as where he says, "A Bishop must be not greedy of filthy lucre not covetous;" "the Deacons must be not greedy of filthy lucre;" noticing the while that some supposed that "gain was godliness," and "taught things which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake."[1] And the sin of Korah, or ambition, is condemned by our Lord, when He commands, Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; by St. James, when he says, "Be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation;" and by St. Paul,

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 8; vi. 5. Tit. i. 7, 11.

when he directs that a Bishop should not be a "novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."[2] And both sins together are spoken of by St. Peter, in his exhortation to the Elders to "feed the flock of God not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."[3]

Accordingly, these are the two sins brought before us by our Church in the first lessons of the first Sunday after Easter, which is, as it were, the festival in commemoration of the Ministerial Commission. After celebrating the resurrection of Christ, when He became "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," we proceed to make mention of the means which He has instituted for exercising His Priesthood on earth continually,—for commemorating and applying in the Spirit, among His elect people, again and again, day after day, to the end of the world, that atoning death and glorious resurrection, which He wrought out once for all in His own person on Calvary. He Himself instituted that means on the very day that He rose from the dead, ordaining man, frail and fallible as he is, to be the vessel of His gifts, and to represent Him. When He was risen, He did not first show Himself to His enemies, nor manifest the Spirit, nor unfold His new law, nor destroy the Temple; but He consecrated His Ministers: "As My Father hath sent Me," He said to His Apostles, "even so send I you." And, as if after His pattern, we too, even at this day, follow up the celebration of His

[2] Matt. xx. 26. James iii. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 6.

[3] 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

"taking to Himself His great power," with that of His delegating it to His Church, as the Gospel selected for the same Sunday shows.

Of such high importance then, in our Church's judgment, is the subject of the Christian Ministry; so intimately connected with the Divine scheme of mercy, so full of reverence and awe. This will be best seen by proceeding, as I shall now do, to consider the lesson derived from the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, which, though properly belonging to the Old Covenant, our Church certainly considers applicable to us Christians.

The history in question contains an account, not only of the ambition of Korah himself, who was a Levite or minister, but of the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram, who were not ministers, but, as we now speak, laymen.

In considering it, I shall confine myself to this point, viz. to determine the feelings and circumstances under which these wicked men rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and that, with a view of warning those who speak lightly of schism, separation, and dissent, in this day. For I think it will be seen that they are feelings and circumstances which prevail very widely now as well as then, and, if they do prevail, are as evil now as they were then; St. Jude, in the text plainly intimating that such gainsaying as Korah's is a sin in a Christian, as well as formerly in the Jews, and that those who commit it are in the way to perish. This, then, is a very serious thought; considering, as I have said, how men in these days make light of it.

The outline of the history of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram is this: they rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

and in consequence Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up by an earthquake, and Korah's company was burnt with fire. Now, then let us proceed to the remarks proposed.

1. First, then, let the number and dignity of the offenders be observed. They seem to have been some of the most eminent and considerable persons in Israel. Dathan and Abiram's party are said more than once, with some emphasis, to have been "famous in the congregation, men of renown."[4] Moreover there were among them as many as two hundred and fifty *princes*, or as we should now say, noblemen. A very great and formidable opposition to Moses and Aaron was it, when so great a number of eminent persons rebelled against, or (in modern language) became dissenters from the Church. Nor was this all,—a portion of God's appointed ministers joined them. The Levites, as we all know, were the especially holy tribe: a portion of them, viz. the family of Aaron, were priests; but all of them were ministers. Such was Korah; but, dissatisfied with being merely what God had made him, he aspired to be something more, to have the priesthood. And it appears that just as many of his brethren joined him in his rebellion as there were princes who joined Dathan and Abiram. Two hundred and fifty Levites, or ministers, were banded together in this opposition to Moses, forming, from their rank and number a body (to use once more modern language) of very high respectability, to say the least, that is, respectability in the eyes of men.

2. Next, let us observe how confident they were that

[4] Numb. xvi. 2; xxvi. 9.

they were right. They seemed to have entertained no kind of doubt or hesitation. When Moses denounced Dathan and Abiram, and bade all those who wished to escape their curse, to "depart" at once "from the tents of those wicked men," "Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children." You see they had no misgivings, no fears, no perplexity; they saw their way clear; they were sure they were in the right; and they came out, to stand any test, any sentence of wrath which Moses might attempt, as thinking that nothing could come of it. Nor was Korah's confidence less. Moses challenged him and the rest to appear before God, to perform the priest's office, and so to stand the test whether or not He would accept them; and they promptly accepted the proposal. They were to "take their censers, and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord," "and it shall be, that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy." Korah and his company accordingly "stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron;" nay, in that sacred and awful place, where was the glory of the Lord visibly displayed, did Korah endure to "gather all *the congregation*" against Moses and Aaron. Sceptics, were there such standing by, might have made the remark, that both parties were equally sincere, equally confident; and therefore neither was more pleasing to God than the other.

Such was the confidence of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, of the two hundred and fifty princes or nobles, and the two hundred and fifty ministers of God. And

we, who believe that in spite of their confidence Almighty God was against them, are perhaps at first sight tempted to attribute it to some extraordinary infatuation, judicial blindness, special hard-heartedness, or the like,—something quite out of the way, peculiar perhaps to the Jews,—something which cannot happen now. We cannot comprehend how their confidence could possibly be based on *reason*—I do not say on correct reason, but on even *apparent* reason. We do not consider that perhaps they *thought* they had good reasons for what they did, as we often think in our own case, when we really have not. Rather we attribute their conduct to something irrational, to pride, obstinacy, or hatred of the truth, as indeed it was in its origin; but I mean, to some such evil principle operating on the soul *at once*, and not operating on it *through* the pretence of reason, not so operating as to be hidden whether from themselves or others. And thus we lose the lesson which this solemn history is calculated to convey to us at this day; because, since the opposition made to God's Church in these days is professedly based upon reason, not upon mere prejudice, passion, or wilfulness, persons think that the confidence with which they oppose themselves to it, is a very different sort of confidence from that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whereas it is really very much the same.

3. What, then, were the *reasons* or *arguments* which made Korah, Dathan, and Abiram so confident they were in the right,—so confident, that they even ventured to appeal to God, and to rise up against Moses and Aaron as if in the Name of the Lord? Their ground was this: they accused Moses and Aaron of what is

now called *priestcraft.* Let us pay attention to this circumstance.

Now, let it be observed, that there were many rebellions of the people, founded on open and professed *unbelief.* This was not the character of the particular sin under review: it was not a disbelief in God, but in Moses. Distrust in Moses, indeed, was mixed up in all their rebellions; but generally their rebellion was more strictly directed against Almighty God. Thus, when the spies returned, and spread about an evil report of the good land, and the people believed them, this implied a disbelief in the Divine Arm altogether, as manifested in their deliverance and protection. Thus they complained of the manna; and thus they went out on the seventh day to gather it. But it is remarkable, that in the rebellion before us, there is no hint of the promoters of it disbelieving in the power or providence of God over the chosen people; only they accuse Moses of altering or (as we should say) corrupting the divine system. Dathan and Abiram were sons of Reuben, the first-born of the tribes: they might consider that Moses was interfering with their prerogative by birth to lead and govern the people. But, any how, they seem to have relied on their rank and eminence; they and their companions were "famous in the congregation, men of renown," and they could not bring themselves to submit to God's appointment, by which the nation was formed into a Church, and Levi was chosen, at God's inscrutable will, to be the priest instead of Reuben. Accordingly, far from denying that God was with the nation, they maintained it; they only said that He was not specially

with Moses and Aaron; they only claimed an equality of honour and power with Moses and Aaron; they only denounced Moses and Aaron as usurpers, tyrants, and hypocrites. Far from showing any scoffing or lightness of mind, or profaneness, such as Esau's who rejected the blessing, they so esteemed it as to claim it as their own, in all its fulness; nay, they claimed it for the whole people. They were only opposed to what is now called *exclusiveness;* they were champions of the rights of the people against what they called the encroachments, the arrogant pretensions, the priestcraft of Moses their Lawgiver, and Aaron the Saint of the Lord. They said, "Ye take too much upon you, seeing *all* the congregation are holy, *every one of them;* and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves *above* the congregation of the Lord?" Their objection was, that Moses was interposing himself as a mediator between God and them, —limiting the mercies of God, restraining the freedom, obscuring the glory of His grace, and robbing them of their covenanted privileges; that he had instituted an order of priests, whereas they were *all* priests, every one, and needed no human assistance, no voice or advice, or direction, or performance, from fallible man, from men of like passions and imperfections with themselves, in order to approach God withal, and serve Him acceptably. "*All* the congregation are holy," say they, "every one of them; and the Lord is among them." "The Lord is not far off; He is not in the clouds only, He is not on Sinai, He is not on the mercy-seat, He is not with Aaron; but He is among us, in the congregation, as near one man as another, as near to all of us as He is to Moses." Their

partisans affect the same tone even after God's judgment has fallen on the rebels. The people say to Moses and Aaron, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." Yes; they call those separatists and schismatists "the Lord's people," and they accuse Moses and Aaron forsooth of having, by some device of juggling priests, some strange and diabolical stratagem, some secret of magic or science, compassed the death of their enemies, while they pretended to refer it to a miraculous judgment; and they seem as if to pride themselves on their discernment, on the clearness of intellectual vision by which they saw through the fraud, and brought it home to the impostors.

Awful guilt indeed in these self-wise men, if this representation be true! yet it is apparently true, as the words show with which the rebels themselves answer the summons of Moses to come to him. "Wilt thou," say they, "put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up." No; we have eyes; we are not mere dull, brutish, superstitious bigots, to crouch before a priest, and submit to his yoke of bondage; we can reason, we can argue, we are resolved to exercise our free unfettered private judgment, and to determine (candidly indeed and dispassionately), but still to determine for ourselves before we act. We will indeed give a fair hearing to what is told us; we will listen with a becoming deference and with all patience, nay with a sort of consideration and prepossession to what you, O Moses and Aaron, say to us; but still we will not have our eyes put out. No, seeing is believing; we will not go by instinctive feeling, by conscience, by mere probabilities; but every-

thing shall be examined in a rational and enlightened way, everything searched, and sifted, and scrutinized, and rigidly tested, before it is admitted. The burden of proof lies with you; till you have proved to us your claims, we will not go up, we will not obey. To tell the truth, we are suspicious of you. We are "jealous with a godly jealousy" (alas! for men do so speak!) of any encroachments on our spiritual liberty, any assumption of superior holiness, superior acceptableness in one of us over another. We are all brethren, we are all equal, all independent. "Wilt thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?" "Moreover," they continue, "thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards;" or as men now speak, The present system does not work well; there are many abuses, abundant need of reform, much still undone which should be done, much idleness, much inefficiency, many defects in the Church. We see it quite plainly. Do not seek to defend yourselves. "Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up."

Something of the same kind of spirit had already shown itself in the sin of the golden calf, though that sin was open idolatry. Then also the people thought that they had found a better religion than Moses had taught them. They were far from denying God's miraculous providences; but they said that Moses had taken to himself what belonged to the nation; he had taught them in his own way, and they had a right to choose for themselves. "Up," they said, "make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that

brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."[5] And where was Moses? He was with God in prayer and vision. They did not know, or at least understand this. So they said, "What a time for a ruler to be absent! in what a crisis! how much is there that wants doing!—forty days are gone, and he is still away. Is he lost? has he left us here to ourselves? is he feigning any communication from heaven? any how, what binds us to *him?* We are bound indeed to the God who has brought us out of Egypt, but not to the rule of Moses or the line of Aaron." Moses was away; and where was Aaron?—where? the people could not ask, for they were partakers in his sin, rather, they had forced him into their sin, the sin of the golden calf. Aaron was receiving their gold ornaments, and was moulding them into an idol. Alas! the people could not accuse him, who had seduced him into the sin. But there *were* those who might, who did complain; and who they were, since I have been led to the subject, it will be found to our present purpose to inquire.

They were the Levites. While Aaron sinned, they, the inferior ministers, stood silent, but wondering and distressed. These had no part in the sin; and when Moses came down from the mount and said, "Who is on the Lord's side?"[6] then they, and they only, answered the call. "All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him;" and when he ordered them, they promptly "put every man his sword by his side, and went in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slew every man his brother, and every man his

[5] Exod. xxxii. 1. [6] Exod. xxii. 26.

companion, and every man his neighbour;" and "there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." This is considered in Scripture[7] the act of consecration by which the Levites became the sacred tribe; so that their advancement to the ministerial office is historically coincident with Aaron's temporary defection from his more sacred duties in it. All this had happened, as some suppose shortly before, as others think as much as twenty years before, the occurrence which has been under our immediate review; but whether or not the one occurrence, as has been reasonably conjectured, led to the other, whether or not Korah's stouthearted rebellion was the result[8] of ambitious views in the Levites, which their advancement to the sacred ministry had occasioned, still certain it is that at this time "it seemed but a small thing unto them" (in Moses' words) "that the God of Israel had separated them from the congregation of Israel, to bring them near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them;" and "they sought the priesthood also," Aaron's portion, on whom they were appointed to attend.[9] And the circumstance that Aaron had failed on that trying occasion when they were rewarded, might dispose them to contemn him at this time, not recollecting that God's will made the difference between man and man, and that He who gave them His covenanted blessings through bulls and calves, might also vouchsafe them, did it please Him, through frail and erring men; and might dispense with inward

[7] Exod. xxxii. 29. [8] Vid. Patrick on Numb. xvi. 2.
[9] Numb. iii. 10.

perfection, and take up with mere earthen vessels, and be content with faith instead of consistent obedience, as He dispensed with eloquence, or wisdom, or strength. Such then were the circumstances under which the Levites rebelled, being elated by their existing privileges, as the Reubenites were stimulated by jealousy.

The parties then concerned in this formidable conspiracy were not besotted idolaters; they were not infidels; they were not obstinate, prejudiced, unreasoning zealots; they were not the victims of unscrupulous and desperate ambition; but though ambitious, proud, headstrong, obstinate, unbelieving, they veiled all these bad principles, even from their own conscience, under a show of reason, of clear, simple, straightforward, enlightened reason, under a plain argument open to the meanest capacity: "*All* the congregation," they said, "were holy, *every one*." God had signified no exception or exclusion; all had been baptized in the Red Sea, all had been at Sinai. Moses, however, thus they might speak, had added to this simple and primitive religion a system of his own, a system of priestcraft. The especial favours which God had shown Moses were done twenty years before, and could be denied without much chance of contradiction; or if the rebellion took place (as others say) shortly after the Exodus, then it came close upon Aaron's sin in the matter of the golden calf. Any how, an excuse was easily found for explaining away the authority of Moses and Aaron, for denying the priesthood, and accusing it of being a corruption; and for professing to be the champions of a pure and enlightened, and uncorrupt worship,—a worship which would

be quite clear of the idolatrous acts of Aaron, because in it Aaron's prerogative would be destroyed altogether.

Such is the history of the Church in the wilderness, in which we see as in a type the history of the Gospel. And how did it end? I stated in the commencement. The earth opened, and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the congregation of Abiram, their houses, their families, their possessions, and all that belonged to them. Fire went out from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who offered incense.

A very few words will suffice to suggest the lesson to be derived from this awful history; it is this:—If the Old Testament is still our rule of duty, except in such details as imply a local religion and a material sanctuary; if it is our rule of duty in its principles, its doctrines, its precepts; if the Gospel is but the fulfilment and development of the Law: if the parts in both are the same, only the circumstances without and the Spirit within new; if though Circumcision is abolished, yet there is Baptism instead of it; the Passover abolished, yet Holy Communion instead; the Sabbath abolished, yet instead of it the Lord's Day; if the two tables of stone which contained the Law are destroyed, yet the Sermon on the Mount takes their place; if though Moses is gone, Christ is come; and if in like manner, though Aaron is gone and his priestly line, another order of priests is come instead; (and unless this is so, the Old Testament is in a great measure but a dead letter to Christians; and if there be but a chance that it is so, and if it has always been taken to be so, it is a most

serious matter to act as if it were not so;) how great must be the sin of resisting the ministers of Christ, or of intruding into their office! How great the sin of presuming to administer the rites of the Church, to baptize, to celebrate the Holy Communion, or to ordain, or to bless, without a commission! Korah's sin was kept in remembrance for ever on the covering of the Altar, "to be a memorial," says the inspired writer, "that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord, that he be not as Korah and his company;" in other words (as the warning is to be interpreted now), "that no one, who is not descended from the Apostles by laying on of hands, come near to perform the ministerial office before the Lord, that he be not such as Korah and his company." Many, you will say, intrude into it in this day in ignorance. True, it is so. Therefore, for them let us pray in our Lord's words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

SERMON XIX.

The Mysteriousness of our Present Being.

"*I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.*"—PSALM CXXXIX. 14.

IN the very impressive Psalm from which these words are taken, this is worth noticing among other things, —that the inspired writer finds in the mysteries without and within him, a source of admiration and praise. "I will *praise* Thee, *for* I am fearfully and wonderfully made; *marvellous* are Thy works." When Nicodemus heard of God's wonderful working, he said, "How can these things be?" But holy David glories in what the natural man stumbles at. It awes his heart and imagination, to think that God sees him, wherever he is, yet without provoking or irritating his reason. He has no proud thoughts rising against what he cannot understand, and calling for his vigilant control. He does not submit his reason by an effort, but he bursts forth in exultation, to think that God is so mysterious. "Such knowledge," he says, "is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Again, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God!"

This reflection is suitable on the Festival[1] which we are at present engaged in celebrating, on which our thoughts are especially turned to the great doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. It is my intention now to make some remarks upon it; not however explanatory of the doctrine itself, which we have to-day confessed in the Athanasian Creed as fully and explicitly as it can be set forth in human words; but I will endeavour from the text to show, that the difficulty which human words have in expressing it, is no greater than we meet with when we would express in human words even those earthly things of which we actually have experience, and which we cannot deny to exist, because we witness them: so that our part evidently lies in using the mysteries of religion, as David did, simply as a means of impressing on our minds the inscrutableness of Almighty God. Mysteries in religion are measured by the proud according to their own comprehension, by the humble, according to the power of God; the humble glorify God for them, the proud exalt themselves against them.

The text speaks of earthly things,—"I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Now, let us observe some of the mysteries which are involved in our own nature.

1. First, we are made up of soul and body. Now, if we did not know this, so that we cannot deny it, what notion could our minds ever form of such a mixture of natures, and how should we ever succeed in making those who go only by abstract reason take in what we meant? The body is made of matter; this we see; it has a certain extension, make, form, and solidity: by the

[1] Trinity Sunday.

soul we mean that invisible principle which thinks. We are conscious we are alive, and are rational; each man has his own thoughts, feelings, and desires; each man is one to himself, and he knows himself to be one and indivisible,—one in such sense, that while he exists, it were an absurdity to suppose he can be any other than himself; one in a sense in which no material body which consists of parts can be one. He is sure that he is distinct from the body, though joined to it, because he is one, and the body is not one, but a collection of many things. He feels moreover that he is distinct from it, because he uses it; for what a man can use, to that he is superior. No one can by any possibility mistake his body for himself. It is *his;* it is not he. This principle, then, which thinks and acts in the body, and which each person feels to be himself, we call the soul. We do not know what it is; it cannot be reached by any of the senses; we cannot see it or touch it. It has nothing in common with extension or form; to ask what shape the soul is, would be as absurd as to ask what is the shape of a thought, or a wish, or a regret, or a hope. And hence we call the soul spiritual and immaterial, and say that it has no parts, and is of no size at all. All this seems undeniable. Yet observe, if all this be true, what is meant by saying that it is *in* the body, any more than saying that a thought or a hope is in a stone or a tree? *How* is it joined to the body? what keeps it one with the body? what keeps it in the body? what prevents it any moment from separating from the body? when two things which we see are united, they are united by some connexion which we can understand. A chain or cable

keeps a ship in its place; we lay the foundation of a building in the earth, and the building endures. But what is it which unites soul and body? how do they touch? how do they keep together? how is it we do not wander to the stars or the depths of the sea, or to and fro as chance may carry us, while our body remains where it was on earth? So far from its being wonderful that the body one day dies, how is it that it is made to live and move at all? how is it that it keeps from dying a single hour? Certainly it is as incomprehensible as any thing can be, how soul and body can make up one man; and, unless we had the instance before our eyes, we should seem in saying so to be using words without meaning. For instance, would it not be extravagant and idle to speak of time as deep or high, or of space as quick or slow? Not less idle, surely, it perhaps seems to some races of spirits to say that thought and mind have a body, which in the case of man they have, according to God's marvellous will. It is certain, then, that experience outstrips reason in its capacity of knowledge, why then should reason circumscribe faith, when it cannot compass sight?

2. Again: the soul is not only one, and without parts, but moreover, as if by a great contradiction even in terms, it is in every part of the body. It is no where, yet every where. It may be said, indeed, that it is especially in the brain; but, granting this for argument's sake, yet it is quite certain, since every part of his body belongs to him, that a man's self is in every part of his body. No part of a man's body is like a mere instrument, as a knife, or a crutch might be, which he takes up and

may lay down. Every part of it is part of himself; it is connected into one by his soul, which is one. Supposing we take stones and raise a house, the building is not *really* one; it is composed of a number of separate parts, which viewed as collected together, we call one, but which are not one except in our notion of them. But the hands and feet, the head and trunk, form one body under the presence of the soul within them. Unless the soul were in every part, they would not form one body; so that the soul is in every part, uniting it with every other, though it consists of no parts at all. I do not of course mean that there is any real contradiction in these opposite truths; indeed, we know there is not, and cannot be, because they *are* true, because human nature is a fact before us. But the state of the case is a contradiction *when put into words;* we cannot so express it as not to involve an apparent contradiction; and then, if we discriminate our terms, and make distinctions, and balance phrases, and so on, we shall seem to be technical, artificial and speculative, and to use words without meaning.

Now, this is precisely our difficulty, as regards the doctrine of the Ever-blessed Trinity. We have never been in heaven; God, as He is in Himself, is hid from us. We are informed concerning Him by those who were inspired by Him for the purpose, nay by One who "knoweth the Father," His Co-eternal Son Himself, when He came on earth. And, in the message which they brought to us from above, are declarations concerning His nature, which seem to run counter the one to the other. He is revealed to us as One God, the Father, One indivisible Spirit; yet there is said to exist in Him from everlasting

His Only-begotten Son, the same as He is, and yet distinct, and from and in Them both, from everlasting and indivisibly, exists the Co-equal Spirit. All this, put into words, seems a contradiction in terms; men have urged it as such; then Christians, lest they should seem to be unduly and harshly insisting upon words which clash with each other, and so should dishonour the truth of God, and cause hearers to stumble, have guarded their words, and explained them; and then for doing this they have been accused of speculating and theorizing. The same result, doubtless, would take place in the parallel case already mentioned. Had we no bodies, and were a revelation made us that there was a race who had bodies as well as souls, what a number of powerful objections should we seem to possess against that revelation! We might plausibly say, that the words used in conveying it were arbitrary and unmeaning. What (we should ask) was the meaning of saying that the soul had no parts, yet was in every part of the body? what was meant by saying it was every where and no where? how could it be one, and yet repeated, as it were, ten thousand times over in every atom and pore of the body, which it was said to exist in? how could it be confined to the body at all? how did it act upon the body? how happened it, as was pretended, that, when the soul did but will, the arm moved or the feet walked? how can a spirit which cannot touch any thing, yet avail to move so large a mass of matter, and so easily as the human body? These are some of the questions which might be asked, partly on the ground that the alleged fact was impossible, partly that the idea was self-contradictory. And these are just

the kind of questions with which arrogant and profane minds do assail the revealed doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

3. Further consider what a strange state we are in when we dream, and how difficult it would be to convey to a person who had never dreamed what was meant by dreaming. *His* vocabulary would contain no words to express any middle idea between perfect possession and entire suspension of the mind's powers. He would understand what it was to be awake, what it was to be insensible; but a state between the two he would neither have words to describe, nor, if he were self-confident and arrogant, inclination to believe, however well it was attested by those who ought to know. I do not say there is no conceivable accumulation of evidence that would subdue such a man's reason, since we see sometimes men's reason subdued by the evidences of the Gospel, whose hearts are imperfectly affected: but I mean, that this earthly mystery *might* be brought before a man with about that degree of evidence in its favour which the Gospel actually has, not ordinarily overpowering, but constituting a *trial* of his heart, a trial, that is, whether the mysteries contained in it do or do not rouse his pride. Dreaming is not a fiction, but a real state of the mind, though only one or two in the whole world ever dreamed; and if these one or two or a dozen men, spoke to the rest of the world, and unanimously witnessed to the existence of that mysterious state, many doubtless would resist their report, as they do the mysteries of the Gospel, on the ground of its being unintelligible: yet in that case they would be resisting a truth, and would be wrong (not indeed blameably

so, compared with those who on a like account reject the Gospel, which comes to us as a practical, not a mere abstract matter), yet they would undeniably be considering a thing false which was true.

It is no great harm to be wrong in a matter of opinion; but in matters which influence conduct, which bear upon our eternal interests, such as Revealed Religion, surely it is most hazardous, most unwise, though it is so common, to stumble at its mysteries, instead of believing and acting upon its threats and promises. Instead of embracing what they can understand, together with what they cannot, men criticise the wording in which truths are conveyed, which came from heaven. The inspired Apostles taught them to the first Christian converts, and they, according to the capacities of human language, whether their own or the Apostles', partly one and partly the other, preserved them; and we, instead of thanking them for the benefit, instead of rejoicing that they should have handed on to us those secrets concerning God, instead of thanking Him for His condescension in allowing us to hear them, have hearts cold enough to complain of their mysteriousness. Profane minds ask, "Is God one, or three?" They are answered, He is One and He is also Three. They reply "He cannot be One in the same sense in which He is Three." It is in reply allowed to them, "He is Three in one sense, One in another." They ask, "In what sense? what is that sense in which He is Three Persons,—what is that sense of the word Person, such that it neither stands for one separate Being, as it does with men, nor yet comes short of such a real and sufficient sense as the word requires?" We reply

that we do *not know* that intermediate sense; we cannot reconcile, we confess, the distinct portions of the doctrine; we can but take what is given us, and be content. They rejoin, that, if this be so, we are using words without meaning. We answer, No, not without meaning in themselves, but without meaning which *we* fully apprehend. God understands His own words, though human. God, when He gave the doctrine, put it into words, and the doctrine, as we word it, is the doctrine as the Apostles worded it; it is conveyed to us with the same degree of meaning in it, intelligible to us, with which the Apostles received it; so that it is no reason for giving it up that in part it is not intelligible. This we say; and they insist in reply, as if it were a sufficient answer, that the doctrine, as a whole, *is* unintelligible to us (which we grant); that the words which we use have very little meaning (which is not true, though *we* may not see the full meaning); and so they think to excuse their rejection of them.

But surely all this, I say, is much the same as what might take place in any discussion about dreaming, in a company where one or two persons had experienced it, and the multitude not. It might be said to those who told us of it, Do you mean that it is a state of waking or insensibility? is it one or the other? what is that sense in which we are not insensible in dreaming, and yet are not awake and ourselves? Now if we have mysteries even about ourselves, which we cannot even put into words accurately, much more may we suppose, even were we not told it, that there are mysteries in the nature of Almighty God; and so far from its being improbable that there should be mysteries, the declaration that there

are, even adds some probability to the revelation which declares them. On the other hand, still more unreasonable is disbelief, if it be grounded on the mysteriousness of the revelation; because, if we cannot put into consistent human language human things, if the state of dreaming, which we experience commonly, must be described in words either vague or contradictory, much less is there to surprise us if human words are insufficient to describe heavenly things.

These are a few, out of the many remarks which might be made concerning our own mysterious state,—that is, concerning things in us which we know to *be* really and truly, yet which we cannot accurately reflect upon and contemplate, cannot describe, cannot put into words, and cannot convey to another's comprehension who does not experience them. But this is a very large subject. Let a man consider how hardly he is able and how circuitously he is forced to describe the commonest objects of nature, when he attempts to substitute reason for sight, how difficult it is to define things, how impracticable it is to convey to another any complicated, or any deep or refined feeling, how inconsistent and self-contradictory his own feelings seem, when put into words, how he subjects himself in consequence to misunderstanding, or ridicule, or triumphant criticism; and he will not wonder at the impossibility of duly delineating in earthly words the first Cause of all thought, the Father of spirits, the One Eternal Mind, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see, the incomprehensible infinite God.

To conclude. One objection only, as it seems to me, can be made to these reflections, and that is soon answered. It may be said that, though there be, as there well may be, ten thousand mysteries about the Divine Nature, yet why should they be disclosed in the Gospel? because the very circumstance that they *cannot* be put into words is a reason why this should not be attempted. But this surely is a very bold and presumptuous way of speaking, not to say more about it; as if we had any means of knowing, as if we had any right to ask, why God does what He does in the very way He does it; as if sinners, receiving a great and unmerited favour, were not very unthankful and acting almost madly, in saying, Why was it given us in this way, not in that? Is God obliged to take us into counsel, and explain to us the reason for every thing He does; or is it our plain duty to take what is given us, and feed upon it in faith? And to those who do thus receive the blessed doctrine under consideration, it will be found to produce special and singular practical effects on them, on the very ground of its mysteriousness. There is nothing, according as we are given to see and judge of things, which will make a greater difference in the temper, character, and habits of an individual, than the circumstance of his holding or not holding the Gospel to be mysterious. Even then, if we go by its influence on our minds, we might safely pronounce that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and of other like mysteries, cannot be unimportant. If it be true (as we hold it to be), it must be of consequence; for it tends to draw the mind in one particular direction, and to form it on a

different mould from theirs who do not believe in it. And thus what we actually are given to see, does go a certain way in confirming to us what Scripture and the Church declare to us, that belief in this doctrine is actually necessary to salvation, by showing us that such belief has a moral effect on us. The temper of true faith is described in the text,—"Marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." A religious mind is ever marvelling, and irreligious men laugh and scoff at it because it marvels. A religious mind is ever looking out of itself, is ever pondering God's words, is ever "looking into" them with the Angels, is ever realizing to itself Him on whom it depends, and who is the centre of all truth and good. Carnal and proud minds are contented with self; they like to remain at home; when they hear of mysteries, they have no devout curiosity to go and see the great sight, though it be ever so little out of their way; and when it actually falls in their path, they stumble at it. As great then as is the difference between hanging upon the thought of God and resting in ourselves, lifting up the heart to God and bringing all things in heaven and earth down to ourselves, exalting God and exalting reason, measuring things by God's power and measuring them by our own ignorance, so great is the difference between him who believes in the Christian mysteries and him who does not. And were there no other reason for the revelation of them, but this gracious one, of raising us, refining us, making us reverent, making us expectant and devout, surely this would be more than a sufficient one.

Let us then all, learned and unlearned, gain this great

benefit from the mystery of the Ever-blessed Trinity. It is calculated to humble the wise in this world with the thought of what is above them, and to encourage and elevate the lowly with the thought of Almighty God, and the glories and marvels which shall one day be revealed to them. In the Beatific Vision of God, should we through His grace be found worthy of it, we shall comprehend clearly what we now dutifully repeat and desire to know, how the Father Almighty is truly and by Himself God, the Eternal Son truly and by Himself God, and the Holy Ghost truly and by Himself God, and yet not three Gods but one God.

SERMON XX.

The Ventures of Faith.

"*They say unto Him, We are able.*"—MATT. xx. 22.

THESE words of the holy Apostles James and John were in reply to a very solemn question addressed to them by their Divine Master. They coveted, with a noble ambition, though as yet unpractised in the highest wisdom, untaught in the holiest truth,—they coveted to sit beside Him on His Throne of Glory. They would be content with nothing short of that special gift which He had come to grant to His elect, which He shortly after died to purchase for them, and which He offers to us. They ask the gift of eternal life; and He in answer told them, not that they should have it (though for them it was really reserved), but He reminded them what they *must venture for it;* "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able." Here then a great lesson is impressed upon us, that our duty as Christians lies in

this, in making ventures for eternal life without the absolute certainty of success.

Success and reward everlasting they will have, who persevere unto the end. Doubt we cannot, that the ventures of all Christ's servants must be returned to them at the Last Day with abundant increase. This is a true saying,—He returns far more than we lend to Him, and without fail. But I am speaking of individuals, of ourselves one by one. No one among us knows for certain that he himself will persevere; yet every one among us, to give himself even a chance of success at all, must make a venture. As regards individuals, then, it is quite true, that all of us must for certain make ventures for heaven, yet without the certainty of success through them. This, indeed, is the very meaning of the word "venture;" for that is a strange venture which has nothing in it of fear, risk, danger, anxiety, uncertainty. Yes; so it certainly is; and in this consists the excellence and nobleness of *faith;* this is the very reason why *faith* is singled out from other graces, and honoured as the especial means of our justification, because its presence implies that we have the heart to make a venture.

St. Paul sufficiently sets this before us in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, which opens with a definition of faith, and after that, gives us examples of it, as if to guard against any possibility of mistake. After quoting the text, "the just shall live by faith," and thereby showing clearly that he is speaking of what he treats in his Epistle to the Romans as *justifying* faith, he continues, "Now faith is the substance," that is, the

realizing, "of things hoped for, the evidence," that is, the ground of proof, "of things not seen." It is in its very essence the making present what is unseen; the acting upon the mere prospect of it, as if it really were possessed; the venturing upon it, the staking present ease, happiness, or other good, upon the chance of the future. And hence in another epistle he says pointedly, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."[2] If the dead are not raised, we have indeed made a most signal miscalculation in the choice of life, and are altogether at fault. And what is true of the main doctrine itself, is true also of our individual interest in it. This he shows us in his Epistle to the Hebrews, by the instance of the Ancient Saints, who thus risked their present happiness on the chance of future. Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went." He and the rest died "not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Such was the faith of the Patriarchs: and in the text the youthful Apostles, with an untaught but generous simplicity, lay claim to the same. Little as they knew what they said in its fulness, yet their words were any how expressive of their hidden hearts, prophetic of their future conduct. They say unto Him, "We are able." They pledge themselves as if unawares, and are caught by One mightier than they, and, as it were, craftily made captive. But, in truth, their unsuspicious pledge was, after all, heartily made, though they knew not what they promised; and

[2] 1 Cor. xv. 19.

so was accepted. "Are ye able to drink of My cup, and be baptized with My baptism? They say unto Him, We are able." He in answer, without promising them heaven, graciously said, "Ye *shall* drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with."

Our Lord appears to act after the same manner towards St. Peter: He accepted his office of service, yet warned him how little he himself understood it. The zealous Apostle wished to follow his Lord at once: but He answered, "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards."[3] At another time, He claimed the promise already made to Him; He said, "Follow thou Me;" and at the same time explained it, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."[4]

Such were the ventures made in faith, and in uncertainty, by Apostles. Our Saviour, in a passage of St. Luke's Gospel, binds upon us all the necessity of deliberately doing the like,—"Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and is not able to finish." And then He presently adds, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My

[3] John xiii. 36. [4] John xxi. 18–22.

disciple:"[5] thus warning us of the full sacrifice we must make. We give up our all to Him; and He is to claim this or that, or grant us somewhat of it for a season, according to His good pleasure. On the other hand, the case of the rich young man, who went away sorrowful, when our Lord bade him give up his all and follow Him, is an instance of one who had *not* faith to make the venture of this world for the next, upon His word.

If then faith be the essence of a Christian life, and if it be what I have now described, it follows that our duty lies in risking upon Christ's word what we have, for what we have not; and doing so in a noble, generous way, not indeed rashly or lightly, still without knowing accurately what we are doing, not knowing either what we give up, nor again what we shall gain; uncertain about our reward, uncertain about our extent of sacrifice, in all respects leaning, waiting upon Him, trusting in Him to fulfil His promise, trusting in Him to enable us to fulfil our own vows, and so in all respects proceeding without carefulness or anxiety about the future.

Now I dare say that what I have said as yet seems plain and unexceptionable to most of those who hear me; yet surely, when I proceed to draw the practical inference which immediately follows, there are those who in their secret hearts, if not in open avowal, will draw back. Men allow us Ministers of Christ to proceed in our preaching, while we confine ourselves to general truths, until they see that they themselves are implicated in them, and have to act upon them; and then they suddenly come to a stand; they collect themselves and

[5] Luke xiv. 28–33.

draw back, and say, "They do not see *this*—or do not admit *that*"—and though they are quite unable to say *why* that should not follow from what they already allow, which we show *must* follow, still they persist in saying, that they do not see that it does follow; and they look about for excuses, and they say we carry things too far, and that we are extravagant, and that we ought to limit and modify what we say, that we do not take into account times, and seasons, and the like. This is what they pretend; and well has it been said, "where there is a will there is a way;" for there is no truth, however overpoweringly clear, but men may escape from it by shutting their eyes; there is no duty, however urgent, but they may find ten thousand good reasons against it, in their own case. And they are sure to say we carry things too far, when we carry them home to themselves.

This sad infirmity of men, called Christians, is exemplified in the subject immediately before us. Who does not at once admit that faith consists in venturing on Christ's word without seeing? Yet in spite of this, may it not be seriously questioned, whether men in general, even those of the better sort, venture any thing upon His truth at all?

Consider for an instant. Let every one who hears me ask himself the question, what stake has *he* in the truth of Christ's promise? How would he be a whit the worse off, supposing (which is impossible), but, supposing it to fail? We know what it is to have a stake in any venture of this world. We venture our property in plans which promise a return; in plans which we trust, which

we have faith in. What have we ventured for Christ? What have we given to Him on a belief of His promise? The Apostle said, that he and his brethren would be of all men most miserable, if the dead were not raised. Can we in any degree apply this to ourselves? We think, perhaps, at present, we have some hope of heaven; well, *this* we should lose of course; but after all, how should we be worse off as to our *present* condition? A trader, who has embarked some property in a speculation which fails, not only loses his prospect of gain, but somewhat of his own, which he ventured with the *hope* of the gain. This is the question, What have *we* ventured? I really fear, when we come to examine, it will be found that there is nothing we resolve, nothing we do, nothing we do not do, nothing we avoid, nothing we choose, nothing we give up, nothing we pursue, which we should not resolve, and do, and not do, and avoid, and choose, and give up, and pursue, if Christ had not died, and heaven were not promised us. I really fear that most men called Christians, whatever they may profess, whatever they may think they feel, whatever warmth and illumination and love they may claim as their own, yet would go on almost as they do, neither much better nor much worse, if they believed Christianity to be a fable. When young, they indulge their lusts, or at least pursue the world's vanities; as time goes on, they get into a fair way of business, or other mode of making money; then they marry and settle; and their interest coinciding with their duty, they seem to be, and think themselves, respectable and religious men; they grow attached to things as they are; they begin to have a zeal

against vice and error; and they follow after peace with all men. Such conduct indeed, as far as it goes, is right and praiseworthy. Only I say, it has not necessarily any thing to do with religion at all; there is nothing in it which is any proof of the presence of religious principle in those who adopt it; there is nothing they would not do still, though they had nothing to gain from it, except what they gain from it now: they do gain something now, they do gratify their present wishes, they are quiet and orderly, because it is their interest and taste to be so; but they *venture* nothing, they risk, they sacrifice, they abandon nothing on the faith of Christ's word.

For instance: St. Barnabas had a property in Cyprus; he gave it up for the poor of Christ. Here is an intelligible sacrifice. He did something he would not have done, unless the Gospel were true. It is plain, if the Gospel turned out a fable (which God forbid), but if so, he would have taken his line most unskilfully; he would be in a great mistake, and would have suffered a loss. He would be like a merchant whose vessels were wrecked, or whose correspondents had failed. Man has confidence in man, he trusts to the credit of his neighbour; but Christians do not risk largely upon their Saviour's word; and this is the one thing they have to do. Christ tells us Himself, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations;"[6] *i.e.* buy an interest in the next world with that wealth which this world uses unrighteously; feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the sick, and it shall turn to "bags that wax not

[6] Luke xvi. 9.

old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not."[7] Thus almsdeeds, I say, are an intelligible *venture*, and an evidence of faith.

So again the man who, when his prospects in the world are good, gives up the promise of wealth or of eminence, in order to be nearer Christ, to have a place in His temple, to have more opportunity for prayer and praise, he makes a sacrifice.

Or he who, from a noble striving after perfection, puts off the desire of worldly comforts, and is, like Daniel or St. Paul, in much labour and business, yet with a solitary heart, he too ventures something upon the certainty of the world to come.

Or he who, after falling into sin, repents in deed as well as in word; puts some yoke upon his shoulder; subjects himself to punishment; is severe upon his flesh; denies himself innocent pleasures; or puts himself to public shame,—he too shows that his faith is the realizing of things hoped for, the warrant of things not seen.

Or again: he who only gets himself to pray against those things which the many seek after, and to embrace what the heart naturally shrinks from; he who, when God's will seems to tend towards worldly ill, while he deprecates it, yet prevails on himself to say heartily, "Thy will be done;" he, even, is not without his sacrifice. Or he who, being in prospect of wealth, honestly prays God that he may never be rich; or he who is in prospect of station, and earnestly prays that he may never have it; or he who has friends or kindred, and

[7] Luke xii. 33.

acquiesces with an entire heart in their removal while it is yet doubtful, who can say, "Take them away, if it be Thy will, to Thee I give them up, to Thee I commit them," who is willing to be taken at his word; he too risks somewhat, and is accepted.

Such a one is taken at his word, while he understands not, perhaps, what he says; but he is accepted, as meaning somewhat, and risking much. Generous hearts, like James and John, or Peter, often speak largely and confidently beforehand of what they will do for Christ, not insincerely, yet ignorantly; and for their sincerity's sake they are taken at their word as a reward, though they have yet to learn how serious that word is. "They say unto Him, We are able;"—and the vow is recorded in heaven. This is the case of all of us at many seasons. First, at Confirmation; when we promise what was promised for us at Baptism, yet without being able to understand how much we promise, but rather trusting to God gradually to reveal it, and to give us strength according to our day. So again they who enter Holy Orders promise they know not what, engage themselves they know not how deeply, debar themselves of the world's ways they know not how intimately, find perchance they must cut off from them the right hand, sacrifice the desire of their eyes and the stirring of their hearts at the foot of the Cross, while they thought, in their simplicity, they were but choosing the quiet easy life of "plain men dwelling in tents." And so again, in various ways, the circumstances of the times cause men at certain seasons to take this path or that, for religion's sake. They know not whither they are being carried; they see not the

end of their course; they know no more than this, that it is right to do what they are now doing; and they hear a whisper within them, which assures them, as it did the two holy brothers, that whatever their present conduct involves in time to come, they shall, through God's grace, be equal to it. Those blessed Apostles said, "We are able;" and in truth they were enabled to do and suffer as they had said. St. James was given strength to be steadfast unto death, the death of martyrdom; being slain with the sword in Jerusalem. St. John, his brother, had still more to bear, dying last of the Apostles, as St. James first. He had to bear bereavement, first, of his brother, then of the other Apostles. He had to bear a length of years in loneliness, exile, and weakness. He had to experience the dreariness of being solitary, when those whom he loved had been summoned away. He had to live in his own thoughts, without familiar friend, with those only about him who belonged to a younger generation. Of him were demanded by his gracious Lord, as pledges of his faith, all his eye loved and his heart held converse with. He was as a man moving his goods into a far country, who at intervals and by portions sends them before him, till his present abode is well-nigh unfurnished. He sent forward his friends on their journey, while he stayed himself behind, that there might be those in heaven to have thoughts of him, to look out for him, and receive him when his Lord should call. He sent before him, also, other still more voluntary pledges and ventures of his faith,—a self-denying walk, a zealous maintenance of the truth, fasting and prayers, labours of love, a virgin life, buffet-

ings from the heathen, persecution, and banishment. Well might so great a Saint say, at the end of his days "Come, Lord Jesus!" as those who are weary of the night, and wait for the morning. All his thoughts, all his contemplations, desires, and hopes, were stored in the invisible world; and death, when it came, brought back to him the sight of what he had worshipped, what he had loved, what he had held intercourse with, in years long past away. Then, when again brought into the presence of what he had lost, how would remembrance revive, and familiar thoughts long buried come to life! Who shall dare to describe the blessedness of those who find all their pledges safe returned to them, all their ventures abundantly and beyond measure satisfied?

Alas! that we, my brethren, have not more of this high and unearthly spirit! How is it that we are so contented with things as they are,—that we are so willing to be let alone, and to enjoy this life,—that we make such excuses, if any one presses on us the necessity of something higher, the duty of bearing the Cross, if we would earn the Crown, of the Lord Jesus Christ?

I repeat it; what are our ventures and risks upon the truth of His word? for He says expressly, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."[8]

[8] Matt. xix. 29, 30.

SERMON XXI.

Faith and Love.

"*Though I have all Faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.*"—1 Cor. xiii. 2.

I SUPPOSE that all thoughtful readers of the chapter from which these words are taken, have before now been struck with surprise at the varied characteristics which are there ascribed to the excellent grace called love, or charity. What *is* charity? St. Paul answers, by giving a great number of properties of it, all distinct and special. It is patient, it is kind, it has no envy, no self-importance, no ostentation, no indecorum, no selfishness, no irritability, no malevolence. Which of all these is it? for if it is all at once, surely it is a name for all virtues at once.

And what makes this conclusion still more plausible, is, that St. Paul elsewhere actually calls charity "the fulfilling of the Law:" and our Saviour, in like manner, makes our whole duty consist in loving God and loving our neighbour. And St. James calls it "the royal law:" and St. John says, "We know that we have passed from

death unto life, because we love the brethren."[1] Thus the chapter from which the text is taken seems but an exemplification in detail of what is declared in general terms by the inspired writers.

It is well too, by way of contrast, to consider the description of faith given elsewhere by the same Apostle, who, in the chapter before us, describes charity. In his Epistle to the Hebrews he devotes a much longer chapter to it: but his method in treating it is altogether different. He starts with a definition of it, and then he illustrates his clear and precise account of it in a series of instances. The chapter is made up of a repetition again and again, in Noah, in Abraham, in Moses, in David, and in the Prophets, of one and the same precisely marked excellence, called faith, which is such as no one can mistake. Again mention is made of it in the text; and then, though in a different Epistle, and in the midst of a train of thought altogether different, its description, as far as it goes, accurately agrees with what is said in the Hebrews; " faith, so that I could remove mountains;" which moreover is the very account of it given by our Lord, and expresses surely the same habit of mind as that by which Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, preached righteousness, obtained promises, renounced the world, waxed valiant in fight. How then is it that faith is of so definite a character, and love so large and comprehensive?

Now the reason seems to be pretty much what at first sight is the difficulty. The difficulty is whether, if love be such as St. Paul describes, it is not all virtues at

[1] Rom. xiii. 10. Matt. xxii. 40. James ii. 8. 1 John iii. 14.

once; and I answer, that in one sense it *is* all virtues at once, and therefore St. Paul cannot describe it more definitely, more restrictedly than he does. In other words, it is the root of all holy dispositions, and grows and blossoms into them: they are its parts; and when it is described, they of necessity are mentioned. Love is the material (so to speak) out of which all graces are made, the quality of mind which is the fruit of regeneration, and in which the Spirit dwells; according to St. John's words, "Every one that loveth is born of God;" "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."[1] Such is love, and, as being such, it will last for ever. "Charity," or love, "never faileth." Faith and hope are graces of an imperfect state, and they cease with that state; but love is greater, because it is perfection. Faith and hope are graces, as far as we belong to this world,—which is for a time; but love is a grace, because we are creatures of God whether here or elsewhere, and partakers in a redemption which is to last for ever. Faith will not be when there is sight, nor hope when there is enjoyment; but love will (as we believe) increase more and more to all eternity. Faith and hope are means by which we express our love: we believe God's word, because we love it; we hope after heaven, because we love it. We should not have any hope or concern about it, unless we loved it; we should not trust or confide in the God of heaven, unless we loved Him. Faith, then, and hope are but instruments or expressions of love; but as to love itself, we do not love because we believe, for the devils believe, yet do not love; nor do we

[1] 1 John iv. 7, 16.

love because we hope, for hypocrites hope, who do not love. But we love for no cause beyond itself: we love, because it is our nature to love; and it is our nature, because God the Holy Ghost has made it our nature. Love is the immediate fruit and the evidence of regeneration.

It is expressing the same thing in other words, to say, as we may, that faith and hope are not in themselves necessarily graces, but only as grafted on and found in love. Balaam had faith and hope, but not love. "May I die the death of the righteous!" is an act of hope. "The word that the Lord putteth into my mouth, that will I speak," is an act of faith; but his conduct showed that neither his faith nor his hope was loving. The servant in the parable, who fell down at his lord's feet, and begged to be excused his debt, had both faith and hope. He believed his lord able, and he hoped him willing, to forgive him. He went out, and saw a fellow-servant who owed him a small sum, and he behaved at once unmercifully to him, and unthankfully by his lord. He had neither love of God, because he was high-minded, nor love of his brother, because he was hard-hearted. There are then two kinds of faith in God, a good faith and a worthless faith; and two kinds of hope in God, good and worthless: but there are not two kinds of love of God. Love must always be heavenly; it is always the sign of the regenerate. Faith and hope are not in themselves signs, but only that faith "which worketh by love," and that hope which "loves the thing which God commandeth, and desires that which God doth promise." In the text it is said, "Though I had all faith, yet without love I am

nothing:" it is nowhere said, "Though I have all love, without faith I am nothing."

Love, then, is the seed of holiness, and grows into all excellences, not indeed destroying their peculiarities, but making them what they are. A weed has stalk, leaves, and flowers; so has a sweet-smelling plant; because the latter is sweet-smelling, it does not cease to have stalk, leaves, and flowers; but they are all pleasant, because they come of it. In like manner, the soul which is quickened with the spirit of love has faith and hope, and a number of faculties and habits, some of which it might have without love, and some not; but any how, in that soul one and all exist *in* love, though distinct from it; as stalk, leaves, and flowers are as distinct and entire in one plant as in another, yet vary in their quality, according to the plant's nature.

But here it may be asked, whether Scripture does not make faith, not love, the root, and all graces its fruits. I think not; on the contrary, it pointedly intimates that something besides faith is the root, not only in the text, but in our Lord's parable of the Sower; in which we read of persons who, "when they hear, receive the word with joy," yet having no "root,"[3] fall away. Now, receiving the word with joy, surely implies faith; faith, then, is certainly distinct from the *root*, for these persons receive with joy, yet have "*no* root." However, it is allowable to call faith the root, because, in a certain sense at least, works *do* proceed from it. And hence Scripture speaks of "faith *working* by love," which would imply in the form of expression that faith was prior to love. And

[3] Luke viii. 13.

again: in the chapter in which the text occurs, we read of "faith, hope, and charity," an order of words which seems to imply that faith precedes love, or charity. And again, St. Paul says elsewhere, "The *end* of the commandment is *charity*, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and *of faith unfeigned*;"[4] where faith is spoken of as if it were the origin of love.

This must be granted then; and accordingly a question arises, how to adjust these opposite modes of speaking; in *what* sense faith is the beginning of love, and in what sense love is the origin of faith; whether love springs from faith, or faith from love, which comes first, and which last. I observe, then, as follows:—

Faith is the first element of *religion*, and love, of *holiness*; and as holiness and religion are distinct, yet united, so are love and faith. Holiness can exist without religion; religion cannot exist without holiness. Baptized infants, before they come to years of understanding, are holy; they are not religious. Holiness is love of the Divine Law. When God regenerates an infant, He imparts to it the gift of His Holy Spirit; and what is the Spirit thus imparted but the Law written on its heart? Such was the promise, "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." And hence it is said, "This is the love of God, that we keep His *commandments*."[5] God comes to us as a Law, before He comes as a Lawgiver; that is, He sets up His throne within us, and enables us to obey Him, before we have learned to reflect on our own sensations, and to know the voice of God. Such, as if in a type, was Samuel's case;

[4] 1 Tim. i. 5. [5] Heb. viii. 10. 1 John v. 3.

he knew not who it was who called him, till Eli the priest told him. Eli stands for religion, Samuel for holiness; Eli for faith, Samuel for love.

Love then is the motion within us of the new spirit, the holy and renewed heart which God the Holy Ghost gives us; and, as being such, we see how it may exist in infants, who obey the inward law without knowing it, by a sort of natural service, as plants and trees fulfil the functions of their own nature; a service which is most acceptable to God, as being moral and spiritual, though not intellectual. And this, for what we know, may be the state of those little ones who are baptized and taken away before they have learned either to reason or to sin. They may be as the stones of the Everlasting Pavement, crying out continually in praise to God; dimly visible, as if absorbed in the glory which encompasses God's throne; or as the wonderful wheels described by the Prophet, which were living, yet in a way instrumental; for in heaven, where there is no gross matter, the very framework of the Temple is composed of spirits.

Love, then, is the life of those who know not an external world, but who worship God as manifested within them. Such a life however can last but a little while on earth. The eyes see and the reason embraces a lower world, sun, moon, stars, and earth, and men, and all that man does or makes; and this external world does not speak of God upon the face of it. It shows as if it were itself God, and an object of worship, or at least it becomes the creature of a usurper, who has made himself "the god of this world." We are at once forced to reflect, reason, decide, and act; for we are between two, the in-

ward voice speaking one thing within us, and the world speaking another without us; the world tempting, and the Spirit whispering warnings. Hence faith becomes necessary; in other words, God has most mercifully succoured us in this contest, by speaking not only in our hearts, but through the sensible world; and this Voice we call revelation. God has overruled this world of sense, and put a word in its mouth, and bid it prophesy of Him. And thus there are two voices even in the external world; the voice of the tempter calling us to fall down and worship him, and he will give us all; and the voice of God, speaking in aid of the voice in our hearts: and as love is that which hears the voice within us, so faith is that which hears the voice without us; and as love worships God within the shrine, faith discerns Him in the world; and as love is the life of God in the solitary soul, faith is the guardian of love in our intercourse with men; and, while faith ministers to love, love is that which imparts to faith its praise and excellence.

And thus it is that faith is to love as religion to holiness; for religion is the Divine Law as coming to us from without, as holiness is the acquiescence in the same Law as written within. Love then is meditative, tranquil, pure, gentle, abounding in all offices of goodness and truth; and faith is strenuous and energetic, formed for this world, combating it, training the mind towards love, fortifying it in obedience, and overcoming sense and reason by representations more urgent than their own.

Moreover it is plain, that, while love is the root out of which faith grows, faith by receiving the wonderful

tidings of the Gospel, and presenting before the soul its sacred Objects, the mysteries of the faith, the Holy Trinity, and the Incarnate Saviour, expands our love, and raises it to a perfection which otherwise it could never reach.

And thus our duty lies in faith working by love; love is the sacrifice we offer to God, and faith is the sacrificer. Yet they are not distinct from each other except in our way of viewing them. Priest and sacrifice are one; the loving faith and the believing love.

And thus I answer the question concerning the connexion of love and faith. Love is the condition of faith; and faith in turn is the cherisher and maturer of love; it brings love out into works, and therefore is called the root of *works* of love; the substance of the works is love, the outline and direction of them is faith.

This being so, surely we need not be surprised at St. Paul's language, as in the text and verses following. Love is the true ruling principle of the regenerate soul, and faith ministers to it. Love is the end, faith the means; and if the means be difficult, much more is the end. St. Paul says that faith which could remove mountains will not avail without love; and in truth, faith is only half way (as it were) to heaven. By faith we give up this world, but by love we reach into the next world; and it often happens from one cause or another, men are able to get as far as the one, without going on to the other. Too true is it, that the mass of men live neither with faith nor love; they live to themselves, they love themselves selfishly, and do not desire any thing beyond the visible framework of things. This world is their all

in all. But I speak of religious persons; and these, I think, will confess that distaste for the world is quite a distinct thing from the spirit of love. As years go on, the disappointments, troubles, and cares of life, wean a religious mind from attachment to this world. A man sees it is but vanity. He neither receives, nor looks for enjoyment from it. He does not look to the future with hope; he has no prospects; he cares not for the world's smile or frown; for what it can do, what it can withhold. Nay, even his friends are nothing to him; he knows they cannot help him really in his greatest needs, and he has no dependence that they will be continued to him. And thus in the course of time, with a very scanty measure of true divine love, he is enabled, whatever his sphere is, to act above the world, in his degree; to do his plain straightforward duty, because reason tells him he should do it, and because he has no great temptation seducing him from it. Observe, *why* he keeps God's commandments; from *reason*, because he knows he ought, and because he has no strong motives keeping him from doing so. Alas! not from *love* towards those commandments. He has only just so much of the spirit of love as suffices to hinder his resignation from being despondency, and his faith from being dead. Or again, he has had experience of the misery of a laden conscience, the misery of the pollution involved in the numberless little sins of every day, the odiousness of his pride, vanity, fretfulness, wilfulness, arrogance, irritability, profaneness, hardness of heart, and all the other evils which beset him; and he desires earnestly to be cleansed;—yet rather from dislike of sin than direct love of God and Christ.

This then is that middle state in which some of us may be standing in our progress from earth to heaven, and which the text warns us against. It tells us that faith at most only makes a hero, but that love makes a saint; that faith can but put us above the world, but that love brings us under God's throne; that faith can but make us sober, but love makes us happy. It warns us that it is possible for a man to have the clearest, calmest, exactest view of the realities of heaven; that he may most firmly realize and act upon the truths of the Gospel; that he may understand that all about him is but a veil, not a substance; that he may have that full confidence in God's word as to be able to do miracles; that he may have such simple absolute faith as to give up his property, give up all his goods to feed the poor; that he may so scorn the world, that he may with so royal a heart trample on it, as even to give his body to be burned by a glorious martyrdom; and yet—I do not say, be without love; God forbid! I do not suppose the Apostle means there ever *was* actually such a case, but that it is abstractedly possible; that no one of the proper acts of faith, in itself, and necessarily, implies love; that it is distinct from love. He says this,—that, though a person *be* all that has been said, yet unless he be also something besides, unless he have love, it profiteth him nothing. O fearful lesson, to all those who are tempted to pride themselves in their labours, or sufferings, or sacrifices, or works! We are Christ's, not by faith merely, nor by works merely, but by love; not by hating the world, nor by hating sin, nor by venturing for the world to come, nor by calmness, nor by magnanimity,—though

we must do and be all this; and if we *have* love in perfection we *shall*,—but it is love makes faith, not faith love. We are saved, not by any of these things, but by that heavenly flame within us, which, while it consumes what is seen, aspires to what is unseen. Love is the gentle, tranquil, satisfied acquiescence and adherence of the soul in the contemplation of God; not only a preference of God before all things, but a delight in Him because He is God, and because His commandments are good; not any violent emotion or transport, but as St. Paul describes it, long-suffering, kind, modest, unassuming, innocent, simple, orderly, disinterested, meek, pure-hearted, sweet-tempered, patient, enduring. Faith without Charity is dry, harsh, and sapless; it has nothing sweet, engaging, winning, soothing; but it was Charity which brought Christ down. Charity is but another name for the Comforter. It is eternal Charity which is the bond of all things in heaven and earth; it is Charity wherein the Father and the Son are one in the unity of the Spirit; by which the Angels in heaven are one, by which all Saints are one with God, by which the Church is one upon earth.

SERMON XXII.

Watching.

"*Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.*"
—MARK xiii. 33.

OUR Saviour gave this warning when He was leaving this world,—leaving it, that is, as far as His visible presence is concerned. He looked forward to the many hundred years which were to pass before He came again. He knew His own purpose and His Father's purpose gradually to leave the world to itself, gradually to withdraw from it the tokens of His gracious presence. He contemplated, as contemplating all things, the neglect of Him which would spread even among his professed followers; the daring disobedience, and the loud words, which would be ventured against Him and His Father by many whom He had regenerated: and the coldness, cowardice, and tolerance of error which would be displayed by others, who did not go so far as to speak or to act against Him. He foresaw the state of the world and the Church, as we see it this day, when His prolonged absence has made it practically thought, that He never will come back in visible presence: and in the

text, He mercifully whispers into our ears, not to trust in what we see, not to share in that general unbelief, not to be carried away by the world, but to "take heed, watch,[1] pray," and look out for His coming.

Surely this gracious warning should be ever in our thoughts, being so precise, so solemn, so earnest. He foretold His first coming, yet He took His Church by surprise when He came; much more will He come suddenly the second time, and overtake men, now that He has not measured out the interval before it, as then He did, but left our watchfulness to the keeping of faith and love.

Let us then consider this most serious question, which concerns every one of us so nearly;—What it is to *watch* for Christ? He says, "*Watch* ye therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch.*"[2] And again, "If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have *watched*, and not have suffered his house to be broken through."[3] A like warning is given elsewhere both by our Lord and by His Apostles. For instance; we have the parable of the Ten Virgins, five of whom were wise and five foolish; on whom the bridegroom, after tarrying came suddenly, and five were found without oil. On which our Lord says, "*Watch* therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."[4] Again He says, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts

[1] ἀγρυπνεῖτε.
[2] Mark xiii. 35–37, γρηγορεῖτε.
[3] Luke xii. 39.
[4] Matt. xxv. 13.

be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares; for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. *Watch* ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."[5] In like manner He upbraided Peter thus: "Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou *watch* one hour?"[6]

In like manner St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep. The night is far spent, the day is at hand."[7] Again, "*Watch* ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."[8] "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might; put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."[9] "Let us not sleep as do others, but let let us *watch* and be sober."[1] In like manner St. Peter, "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and *watch* unto prayer." "Be sober, be *vigilant*, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."[2] And St. John, "Behold I come as a thief; blessed is he that *watcheth* and keepeth his garments."[3]

Now I consider this word *watching*, first used by our Lord, then by the favoured Disciple, then by the two great Apostles, Peter and Paul, is a remarkable word, remarkable because the idea is not so obvious as might

[5] Luke xxi. 36. [6] Mark xiv. 37. [7] Rom. xiii. 11, 12.
[8] 1 Cor. xvi. 13. [9] Eph. vi. 10-13. [1] 1 Thess. v. 6.
[2] 1 Pet. iv. 7, νήψατε, v. 8. [3] Rev. xvi. 15.

appear at first sight, and next because they all inculcate it. We are not simply to believe, but to watch; not simply to love, but to watch; not simply to obey, but to watch; to watch for what? for that great event, Christ's coming. Whether then we consider what is the obvious meaning of the word, or the Object towards which it directs us, we seem to see a special duty enjoined on us, such as does not naturally come into our minds. Most of us have a general idea what is meant by believing, fearing, loving, and obeying; but perhaps we do not contemplate or apprehend what is meant by watching.

And I conceive it is one of the main points, which, in a practical way, will be found to separate the true and perfect servants of God from the multitude called Christians; from those who are, I do not say false and reprobate, but who are such that we cannot speak much about them, nor can form any notion what will become of them. And in saying this, do not understand me as saying, which I do not, that we can tell for certain who are the perfect, and who the double-minded or incomplete Christians; or that those who discourse and insist upon these subjects are necessarily on the right side of the line. I am but speaking of two *characters*, the true and consistent character, and the inconsistent; and these I say will be found in no slight degree discriminated and distinguished by this one mark,—true Christians, whoever they are, watch, and inconsistent Christians do not. Now what is watching?

I conceive it may be explained as follows:—Do you know the feeling in matters of this life, of expecting a friend, expecting him to come, and he delays? Do you

know what it is to be in unpleasant company, and to wish for the time to pass away, and the hour strike when you may be at liberty? Do you know what it is to be in anxiety lest something should happen which may happen or may not, or to be in suspense about some important event, which makes your heart beat when you are reminded of it, and of which you think the first thing in the morning? Do you know what it is to have a friend in a distant country, to expect news of him, and to wonder from day to day what he is now doing, and whether he is well? Do you know what it is so to live upon a person who is present with you, that your eyes follow his, that you read his soul, that you see all its changes in his countenance, that you anticipate his wishes, that you smile in his smile, and are sad in his sadness, and are downcast when he is vexed, and rejoice in his successes? To watch for Christ is a feeling such as all these; as far as feelings of this world are fit to shadow out those of another.

He watches for Christ who has a sensitive, eager, apprehensive mind; who is awake, alive, quick-sighted, zealous in seeking and honouring Him; who looks out for Him in all that happens, and who would not be surprised, who would not be over-agitated or overwhelmed, if he found that He was coming at once.

And he watches *with* Christ, who, while he looks on to the future, looks back on the past, and does not so contemplate what his Saviour has purchased for him, as to forget what He has suffered for him. He watches with Christ, who ever commemorates and renews in his own person Christ's Cross and Agony, and gladly takes up

that mantle of affliction which Christ wore here, and left behind Him when he ascended. And hence in the Epistles, often as the inspired writers show their desire for His second coming, as often do they show their memory of His first, and never lose sight of His Crucifixion in His Resurrection. Thus if St. Paul reminds the Romans that they "wait for the redemption of the body" at the Last Day, he also says, "If so be that we *suffer with Him*, that we may be also glorified together." If he speaks to the Corinthians of "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," he also speaks of "always bearing about in the body the *dying* of the Lord Jesus, *that* the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." If to the Philippians of "the power of His resurrection," he adds at once "*and the fellowship of His sufferings*, being made conformable unto His death." If he consoles the Colossians with the hope "when Christ shall appear," of their "appearing with Him in glory, he has already declared that he "*fills up that which remains of the afflictions of Christ* in his flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church."[4] Thus the thought of what Christ is, must not obliterate from the mind the thought of what He was; and faith is always sorrowing with Him while it rejoices. And the same union of opposite thoughts is impressed on us in Holy Communion, in which we see Christ's death and resurrection together, at one and the same time; we commemorate the one, we rejoice in the other; we make an offering, and we gain a blessing.

[4] Rom. viii. 17-23. 1 Cor. i. 7. 2 Cor. iv. 10. Phil. iii. 10. Col. iii. 4; i. 24.

This then is to watch; to be detached from what is present, and to live in what is unseen; to live in the thought of Christ as He came once, and as He will come again; to desire His second coming, from our affectionate and grateful remembrance of His first. And this it is, in which we shall find that men in general are wanting. They are indeed without faith and love also; but at least they profess to have these graces, nor is it easy to convince them that they have not. For they consider they have faith, if they do but own that the Bible came from God, or that they trust wholly in Christ for salvation; and they consider they have love if they obey some of the most obvious of God's commandments. Love and faith they think they have; but surely they do not even fancy that they watch. What is meant by watching, and how it is a duty, they have no definite idea; and thus it accidentally happens that watching is a suitable test of a Christian, in that it is that particular property of faith and love, which, essential as it is, men of this world do not even profess; that particular property, which is the life or energy of faith and love, the way in which faith and love, if genuine, show themselves.

It is easy to exemplify what I mean, from the experience which we all have of life. Many men indeed are open revilers of religion, or at least openly disobey its laws; but let us consider those who are of a more sober and conscientious cast of mind. They have a number of good qualities, and are in a certain sense and up to a certain point religious; but they do not watch. Their notion of religion is briefly this: loving God indeed, but loving this world too; not only doing their

duty, but finding their chief and highest *good*, in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them, resting in it, taking it as their portion. They serve God, and they seek Him; but they look on the present world as if it were the eternal, not a mere temporary, scene of their duties and privileges, and never contemplate the prospect of being separated from it. It is not that they forget God, or do not live by principle, or forget that the goods of this world are His gift; but they love them for their own sake more than for the sake of the Giver, and reckon on their remaining, as if they had that permanence which their duties and religious privileges have. They do not understand that they are called to be strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, and that their worldly lot and worldly goods are a sort of accident of their existence, and that they really have no property, though human law guarantees property to them. Accordingly, they set their heart upon their goods, be they great or little, not without a sense of religion the while, but still idolatrously. *This* is their fault,—an identifying God with this world, and therefore an idolatry towards this world; and so they are rid of the trouble of looking out for their God, for they think they have found Him in the goods of this world. While, then, they are really praiseworthy in many parts of their conduct, benevolent, charitable, kind, neighbourly, and useful in their generation, nay, constant perhaps in the ordinary religious duties which custom has established, and while they display much right and amiable feeling, and much correctness in opinion, and are even in the way to improve in character and conduct as time goes

on, correct much that is amiss, gain greater command over themselves, mature in judgment, and are much looked up to in consequence; yet still it is plain that they love this world, would be loth to leave it, and wish to have more of its good things. They like wealth, and distinction, and credit, and influence. They may improve in conduct, but not in aims; they advance, but they do not mount; they are moving on a low level, and were they to move on for centuries, would never rise above the atmosphere of this world. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."[5] This is the temper of mind which they have not; and when we reflect how rarely it *is* found among professing Christians, we shall see why our Lord is so urgent in enforcing it;—as if He said, "I am not warning you, My followers, against open apostasy; that will not be; but I foresee that very few will keep awake and watch while I am away. Blessed are the servants who do so; few will open to me *immediately*, when I knock. They will have something to do first; they will have to get ready. They will have to recover from the surprise and confusion which overtake them on the first news of My coming, and will need time to collect themselves, and summon about them their better thoughts and affections. They feel themselves very well off as they are; and wish to serve God as they are. They are satisfied to remain on earth; they do not wish to move; they do not wish to change."

Without denying, then, to these persons the praise of

[5] Hab. ii. 1.

many religious habits and practices, I would say that they want the tender and sensitive heart which hangs on the thought of Christ, and lives in His love. The breath of the world has a peculiar power in what may be called rusting the soul. The mirror within them, instead of reflecting back the Son of God their Saviour, has become dim and discoloured; and hence, though (to use a common expression) they have a good deal of good *in* them, it is only *in* them, it is not through them, around them, and upon them. An evil crust is *on* them: they think with the world; they are full of the world's notions and modes of speaking; they appeal to the world, and have a sort of reverence for what the world will say. There is a want of naturalness, simplicity, and childlike teachableness in them. It is difficult to touch them, or (what may be called) get at them, and to persuade them to a straightforward course in religion. They start off when you least expect it: they have reservations, make distinctions, take exceptions, indulge in refinements, in questions where there are really but two sides, a right and a wrong. Their religious feelings do not flow forth easily, at times when they ought to flow; either they are diffident, and can say nothing, or else they are affected and strained in their mode of conversing. And as a rust preys upon metal and eats into it, so does this worldly spirit penetrate more and more deeply into the soul which once admits it. And this is one great end, as it would appear, of afflictions, viz., to rub away and clear off these outward defilements, and to keep the soul in a measure of its baptismal purity and brightness.

Now, it cannot surely be doubted that multitudes in

the Church are such as I have been describing, and that they would not, could not, at once welcome our Lord on His coming. We cannot, indeed, apply what has been said to this or that individual; but on the whole, viewing the multitude, one cannot be mistaken. There may be exceptions; but after all conceivable deductions, a large body must remain thus double-minded, thus attempting to unite things incompatible. This we might be sure of, though Christ had said nothing on the subject; but it is a most affecting and solemn thought, that He has actually called our attention to this very danger, the danger of a worldly religiousness, for so it may be called, though it *is* religiousness; this mixture of religion and unbelief, which serves God indeed, but loves the fashions, the distinctions, the pleasures, the comforts of this life,—which feels a satisfaction in being prosperous in circumstances, likes pomps and vanities, is particular about food, raiment, house, furniture, and domestic matters, courts great people, and aims at having a position in society. He warns His disciples of the danger of having their minds drawn off from the thought of Him, by whatever cause; He warns them against *all* excitements, *all* allurements of this world; He solemnly warns them that the world will not be prepared for His coming, and tenderly intreats of them not to take their portion with the world. He warns them by the instance of the rich man whose soul was required, of the servant who ate and drank, and of the foolish virgins. When He comes, they will one and all want time; their head will be confused, their eyes will swim, their tongue falter, their limbs totter, as men who are suddenly

awakened. They will not all at once collect their senses and faculties. O fearful thought! the bridal train is sweeping by,—Angels are there,—the just made perfect are there,—little children, and holy teachers, and white-robed saints, and martyrs washed in blood; the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. She has already attired herself: while we have been sleeping, she has been robing; she has been adding jewel to jewel, and grace to grace; she has been gathering in her chosen ones, one by one, and has been exercising them in holiness, and purifying them for her Lord; and now her marriage hour is come. The holy Jerusalem is descending, and a loud voice proclaims, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him!" but we, alas! are but dazzled with the blaze of light, and neither welcome the sound, nor obey it,—and all for what? what shall we have gained then? what will this world have then done for us? wretched, deceiving world! which will then be burned up, unable not only to profit us, but to save itself. Miserable hour, indeed, will that be, when the full consciousness breaks on us of what we will not believe now, viz., that we *are* at present serving the world. We trifle with our conscience now; we deceive our better judgment; we repel the hints of those who tell us that we are joining ourselves to this perishing world. We *will* taste a little of its pleasures, and follow its ways, and think it no harm, so that we do not altogether neglect religion. I mean, we allow ourselves to covet what we have not, to boast in what we have, to look down on those who have less; or we allow ourselves to profess what we do not try to practise, to argue

for the sake of victory, and to debate when we should be obeying; and we pride ourselves on our reasoning powers, and think ourselves enlightened, and despise those who had less to say for themselves, and set forth and defend our own theories; or we are over-anxious, fretful, and care-worn about worldly matters, spiteful, envious, jealous, discontented, and evil-natured: in one or other way we take our portion with this world, and we will not believe that we do. We obstinately refuse to believe it; we know we are not altogether irreligious, and we persuade ourselves that we are religious. We learn to think it is possible to be too religious; we have taught ourselves that there is nothing high or deep in religion, no great exercise of our affections, no great food for our thoughts, no great work for our exertions. We go on in a self-satisfied or a self-conceited way, not looking out of ourselves, not standing like soldiers on the watch in the dark night; but we kindle our own fire, and delight ourselves in the sparks of it. This is our state, or something like this, and the Day will declare it; the Day is at hand, and the Day will search our hearts, and bring it home even to ourselves, that we have been cheating ourselves with words, and have not served Christ, as the Redeemer of the soul claims, but with a meagre, partial, worldly service, and without really contemplating Him who is above and apart from this world.

Year passes after year silently; Christ's coming is ever nearer than it was. O that, as He comes nearer earth, we may approach nearer heaven! O, my brethren, pray Him to give you the heart to seek Him in sincerity.

Pray Him to make you in earnest. You have one work only, to bear your cross after Him. Resolve in His strength to do so. Resolve to be no longer beguiled by "shadows of religion," by words, or by disputings, or by notions, or by high professions, or by excuses, or by the world's promises or threats. Pray Him to give you what Scripture calls "an honest and good heart," or "a perfect heart," and, without waiting, begin at once to obey Him with the best heart you have. Any obedience is better than none,—any profession which is disjoined from obedience, is a mere pretence and deceit. Any religion which does not bring you nearer to God is of the world. You have to seek His face; obedience is the only way of seeking Him. All your duties are obediences. If you are to believe the truths He has revealed, to regulate yourselves by His precepts, to be frequent in His ordinances, to adhere to His Church and people, why is it, except because *He* has bid you? and to do what He bids is to obey Him, and to obey Him is to approach Him. Every act of obedience is an approach,—an approach to Him who is not far off, though He seems so, but close behind this visible screen of things which hides Him from us. He is behind this material framework; earth and sky are but a veil going between Him and us; the day will come when He will rend that veil, and show Himself to us. And then, according as we have waited for Him, will He recompense us. If we have forgotten Him, He will not know us; but "blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh shall find watching. He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve

them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."[6] May this be the portion of every one of us! It is hard to attain it; but it is woeful to fail. Life is short; death is certain; and the world to come is everlasting.

[6] Luke xii. 37. 38.

SERMON XXIII.[1]

Keeping Fast and Festival.

"*A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance.*"—ECCLES. iii. 4.

AT Christmas we joy with the natural, unmixed joy of children, but at Easter our joy is highly wrought and refined in its character. It is not the spontaneous and unartificial outbreak which the news of Redemption might occasion, but it is thoughtful; it has a long history before it, and has run through a long course of feelings before it becomes what it is. It is a last feeling and not a first. St. Paul describes its nature and its formation, when he says, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."[2] And the prophet Isaiah, when he says, "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil."[3] Or as it was fulfilled in the case of our Lord

[1] Preached on Easter-day. [2] Rom. v. 3–5. [3] Isaiah ix. 3.

Himself, who, as being the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings. Accordingly, Christmas Day is ushered in with a time of awful expectation only, but Easter Day with the long fast of Lent, and the rigours of the Holy Week just past: and it springs out and (as it were) is born of Good Friday.

On such a day, then, from the very intensity of joy which Christians ought to feel, and the trial which they have gone through, they will often be disposed to say little. Rather, like sick people convalescent, when the crisis is past, the illness over, but strength not yet come, they will go forth to the light of day and the freshness of the air, and silently sit down with great delight under the shadow of that Tree, whose fruit is sweet to their taste. They are disposed rather to muse and be at peace, than to use many words; for their joy has been so much the child of sorrow, is of so transmuted and complex a nature, so bound up with painful memories and sad associations, that though it is a joy only the greater from the contrast, it is not, cannot be, as if it had never been sorrow.

And in this too the feeling at Easter is not unlike the revulsion of mind on a recovery from sickness, that in sickness also there is much happens to us that is strange, much that we must feebly comprehend and vaguely follow after. For in sickness the mind wanders from things that are seen into the unknown world, it turns back into itself, and is in company with mysteries; it is brought into contact with objects which it cannot describe, which it cannot ascertain. It sees the skirts of powers and providences beyond this world, and is at

least more alive, if not more exposed to the invisible influences, bad and good, which are its portion in this state of trial. And afterwards it has recollections which are painful, recollections of distress, of which it cannot recall the reasons, of pursuits without an object, and gleams of relief without continuance. And what is all this but a parallel feeling to that, with which the Christian has gone through the contemplations put before his faith in the week just passed, which are to him as a fearful harrowing dream, of which the spell is now broken? The subjects, indeed, which have been brought before him are no dream, but a reality,—his Saviour's sufferings, his own misery and sin. But, alas! to him at best they are but a dream, because, from lack of faith and of spiritual discernment, he understands them so imperfectly. They have been to him a dream, because only at moments his heart has caught a vivid glimpse of what was continually before his reason,—because the impression it made upon him was irregular, shifting, and transitory,—because even when he contemplated steadily his Saviour's sufferings, he did not, could not understand the deep reasons of them, or the meaning of His Saviour's words,—because what most forcibly affected him came through his irrational nature, was not of the mind but of the flesh, not of the scenes of sorrow which the Lessons and Gospels record, but of his own discomfort of body, which he has been bound, as far as health allows, to make sympathize with the history of those sufferings which are his salvation. And thus I say his disquiet during the week has been like that of a bad dream, restless and dreary; he has felt he ought to be very sorry, and could not say why,

—could not master his grief, could not realize his fears, but was as children are, who wonder, weep, and are silent, when they see their parents in sorrow, from a feeling that there is something wrong, though they cannot say what.

And therefore now, though it is over, he cannot so shake off at once what has been, as to enter fully into what is. Christ indeed, though He suffered and died, yet rose again vigorously on the third day, having loosed the pains of death: but we cannot accomplish in our contemplation of Him, what He accomplished really; for He was the Holy One, and we are sinners. We have the languor and oppression of our old selves upon us, though we be new; and therefore we must beg Him who is the Prince of Life, the Life itself, to carry us forth into His new world, for we cannot walk thither, and seat us down whence, like Moses, we may see the land, and meditate upon its beauty!

And yet, though the long season of sorrow which ushers in this Blessed Day, in some sense sobers and quells the keenness of our enjoyment, yet without such preparatory season, let us be sure we shall not rejoice at all. None rejoice in Easter-tide less than those who have not grieved in Lent. This is what is seen in the world at large. To them, one season is the same as another, and they take no account of any. Feast-day and fast-day, holy tide and other tide, are one and the same to them. Hence they do not realize the next world at all. To them the Gospels are but like another history; a course of events which took place eighteen hundred years since. They do not make our Saviour's life and

death present to them: they do not transport themselves back to the time of His sojourn on earth. They do not act over again, and celebrate His history, in their own observance; and the consequence is, that they feel no interest in it. They have neither faith nor love towards it; it has no hold on them. They do not form their estimate of things upon it; they do not hold it as a sort of practical principle in their heart. This is the case not only with the world at large, but too often with men who have the Name of Christ in their mouths. They think they believe in Him, yet when trial comes, or in the daily conduct of life, they are unable to act upon the principles which they profess: and why? because they have thought to dispense with the religious Ordinances, the course of Service, and the round of Sacred Seasons of the Church, and have considered it a simpler and more spiritual religion, not to act religiously except when called to it by extraordinary trial or temptation; because they have thought that, since it is the Christian's duty to rejoice evermore, they would rejoice better if they never sorrowed and never travailed with righteousness. On the contrary, let us be sure that, as previous humiliation sobers our joy, it alone secures it to us. Our Saviour says, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" and what is true hereafter, is true here. Unless we have mourned, in the weeks that are gone, we shall not rejoice in the season now commencing. It is often said, and truly, that providential affliction brings a man nearer to God. What is the observance of Holy Seasons but such a means of grace?

This too must be said concerning the connexion of

Fasts and Feasts in our religious service, viz., that that sobriety in feasting which previous fasting causes, is itself much to be prized, and especially worth securing. For in this does Christian mirth differ from worldly, that it is subdued; and how shall it be subdued except that the past keeps its hold upon us, and while it warns and sobers us, actually indisposes and tames our flesh against indulgence? In the world feasting comes first and fasting afterwards; men first glut themselves, and then loathe their excesses; they take their fill of good, and then suffer; they are rich that they may be poor; they laugh that they may weep; they rise that they may fall. But in the Church of God it is reversed; the poor *shall* be rich, the lowly shall be exalted, those that sow in tears shall reap in joy, those that mourn shall be comforted, those that suffer with Christ shall reign with Him; even as Christ (in our Church's words) "went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain. He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ, and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ, that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life."[4] And what is true of the general course of our redemption is, I say, fulfilled also in the yearly and other commemorations of it. Our Festivals are preceded by humiliation, that we may keep them duly; not boisterously or fanatically, but in a refined, subdued, chastised spirit, which is the true rejoicing in the Lord.

In such a spirit let us endeavour to celebrate this

[4] Visitation of the Sick.

most holy of all Festivals, this continued festal Season, which lasts for fifty days, whereas Lent is forty, as if to show that where sin abounded, there much more has grace abounded. Such indeed seems the tone of mind which took possession of the Apostles when certified of the Resurrection; and while they waited for, or when they had the sight of their risen Lord. If we consider, we shall find the accounts of that season in the Gospels, marked with much of pensiveness and tender and joyful melancholy; the sweet and pleasant frame of those who have gone through pain, and out of pain receive pleasure. Whether we read the account of St. Mary Magdalen weeping at the sepulchre, seeing Jesus and knowing Him not, recognizing His voice, attempting to embrace His feet, and then sinking into silent awe and delight, till she rose and hastened to tell the perplexed Apostles;—or turn to that solemn meeting, which was the third, when He stood on the shore and addressed His disciples, and Peter plunged into the water, and then with the rest was awed into silence and durst not speak, but only obeyed His command, and ate of the fish in silence, and so remained in the presence of One in whom they joyed, whom they loved, as He knew, more than all things, till He broke silence by asking Peter if he loved Him:—or lastly, consider the time when He appeared unto a great number of disciples on the mountain in Galilee, and all worshipped Him, but some doubted:—who does not see that their Festival was such as I have been describing it, a holy, tender, reverent, manly joy, not *so* manly as to be rude, not *so* tender as to be effeminate, but (as if) an Angel's

mood, the mingled offering of all that is best and highest in man's and woman's nature brought together, —St. Mary Magdalen and St. Peter blended into St. John? And here perhaps we learn a lesson from the deep silence which Scripture observes concerning the Blessed Virgin[5] after the Resurrection; as if she, who was too pure and holy a flower to be more than seen here on earth, even during the season of her Son's humiliation, was altogether drawn by the Angels within the veil on His Resurrection, and had her joy in Paradise with Gabriel who had been the first to honour her, and with those elder Saints who arose after the Resurrection, appeared in the Holy City, and then vanished away.

May we partake in such calm and heavenly joy; and, while we pray for it, recollecting the while that we are still on earth, and our duties in this world, let us never forget that, while our love must be silent, our faith must be vigorous and lively. Let us never forget that in proportion as our love is "rooted and grounded" in the next world, our faith must branch forth like a fruitful tree into this. The calmer our hearts, the more active be our lives; the more tranquil we are, the more busy; the more resigned, the more zealous; the more unruffled, the more fervent. This is one of the many paradoxes in the world's judgment of him, which the Christian realizes in himself. Christ is risen; He is risen from the dead. We may well cry out, "Alleluia, the Lord Omnipotent reigneth." He has crushed all the power of the enemy under His feet. He has gone upon the lion and the adder. He has stopped the lion's mouth for us His

[5] *Vide* Christian year. Fourth Sunday in Lent.

people, and has bruised the serpent's head. There is nothing impossible to us now, if we do but enter into the fulness of our privileges, the wondrous power of our gifts. The thing cannot be named in heaven or earth within the limits of truth and obedience which we cannot do through Christ; the petition cannot be named which may not be accorded to us for His Name's sake. For, we who have risen with Him from the grave, stand in His might, and are allowed to use His weapons. His infinite influence with the Father is ours,—not always to use, for perhaps in this or that effort we make, or petition we prefer, it would not be good for us; but so far ours, so fully ours, that when we ask and do things according to His will, we are really possessed of a power with God, and do prevail:—so that little as we may know when and when not, we are continually possessed of heavenly weapons, we are continually touching the springs of the most wonderful providences in heaven and earth; and by the Name, and the Sign, and the Blood of the Son of God, we are able to make devils tremble and Saints rejoice. Such are the arms which faith uses, small in appearance, yet "not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;"[6] despised by the world, what seems a mere word, or a mere symbol, or mere bread and wine; but God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and as all things spring from small beginnings, from seeds and elements invisible or insignificant, so when God would renew the race of man, and

[6] 2 Cor. x. 4.

reverse the course of human life and earthly affairs, He chose cheap things for the rudiments of His work, and bade us believe that He *could* work through them, and He would do so. As then we Christians discern in Him, when He came on earth, not the carpenter's son, but the Eternal Word Incarnate, as we see beauty in Him in whom the world saw no form or comeliness, as we discern in that death an Atonement for sin in which the world saw nothing but a malefactor's sentence; so let us believe with full persuasion that all that He has bequeathed to us has power from Him. Let us accept His Ordinances, and His Creed, and His precepts; and let us stand upright with an undaunted faith, resolute, with faces like flint, to serve Him in and through them; to inflict them upon the world without misgiving, without wavering, without anxiety; being sure that He who saved us from hell through a Body of flesh which the world insulted, tortured, and triumphed over, much more can now apply the benefits of His passion through Ordinances which the world has lacerated and now mocks.

This then, my brethren, be our spirit on this day. God rested from His labours on the seventh day, yet He worketh evermore. Christ entered into His rest, yet He too ever works. We too, if it may be said, in adoring and lowly imitation of what is infinite, while we rest in Christ and rejoice in His shadow, let us too beware of sloth and cowardice, but serve Him with steadfast eyes yet active hands; that we may be truly His in our hearts, as we were made His by Baptism,—as we are made His continually, by the recurring celebration of His purifying Fasts and holy Feasts.

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